MARDI GRAS!

MICHAEL GOODWIN GOES DOWN TO NEW ORLEANS WITH DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER LES BLANK. THEY SPEND 24 HOURS SHOOTING A FRIED-CHICKEN COMMERCIAL IN A CITY GONE MAD.

TAKE ONE

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE MOVIES

THE MUPPETS

A PEEK BEHIND THE SCENES ON THE MUPPET MOVIE SET

AKIRA KUROSAWA

COPPOLA, LUCAS, SCHRADER AND PAKULA ALL MADE TIME TO SEE THE MASTER

CAROLE LAURE

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE BEAUTIFUL STAR OF "GET OUT YOUR HANDKERCHIEFS"

AND...

A MOVIE-GOER'S GUIDE TO NEW YORK/ PARIS REPORT/ HOMAGE TO RENOIR

for the best in foreign films. . .

Blue Country

from the maker of *Cousin, Cousine*

An uninhibited group of eccentric peasants and ex-Parisians mingle in this enchanting comedy to savor the pleasures of country life and love — with the tang of city sophistication. The delectable Bridgette Fossey *(Forbidden Games, The Man Who Loved Women)* stars.

Quartet Films, Inc.
Director: Jean-Charles Tacchella
Starring: Bridgette Fossey, Jacques Serres
Released 1978 105 minutes (C)

look to films incorporated

Mr. Klein

the French Academy Award winner

An elegant horror story, a taut psychological thriller, and a harrowing allegory, starring Alain Delon as a cynical, suave profiteer in the occupied Paris of 1942 who is mistaken for another, Jewish, Klein.

Quartet Films, Inc.
Director: Joseph Losey
Starring: Alain Delon, Jeanne Moreau, Juliet Berto
Released 1977 124 minutes (C)

Cat and Mouse

Lelouch's romantic crime comedy

An engaging cast of characters tries to solve the mystery-death of a millionaire in a plot rife with clues, suspects, red herrings and romance between the unlikeliest lovers: the inspector and a prime suspect! From the maker of *A Man and A Woman.*

Quartet Films, Inc.
Producer-Director: Claude Lelouch
Starring: Michele Morgan, Serge Reggiani, Jean-Pierre Aumont
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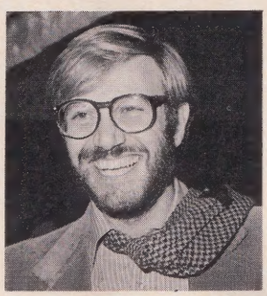

The End of an Era

Astute readers of our masthead will have noticed that, as of this issue the name of our publisher, Peter Lebensold, no longer appears at the top. Mr. Lebensold, who helped found the magazine in 1967, has left Take One *to pursue other interests in film production and publishing.*

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LETTERS

Interiors

We are a group of inmates here in this Federal Correctional Institution who really enjoy your magazine, as it is not only very entertaining, but it is one of the few sources we can look forward to to keep us abreast of the current cinema.

I especially enjoyed Ira Halberstadt's article on Woody Allen, (Nov. '78) and am sorry I have missed *Annie Hall* and *Interiors*, as I have seemed to take a page from his script of *Take the Money and Run* and like Virgil, am now doing a stretch for bank robbery.

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I wish to thank you for your time and consideration and will be looking forward to your next issue.

Conrad C. Cain
No. 41265-133,
P.O. Box 100,
Petersburg, VA 23803

I left my heart...

I enjoyed Harriet Polt's "A Movie Buff's Guide to San Francisco" in your January issue. I hope that you will make this part of a continuing series, so that your readers will not feel so lost in other cities.

However, I lived in San Francisco for the past two and a half years and there are some glaring omissions and errors in the article:

(1) Every time I have been to the Old Waldorf it was at 444 Battery Street near the Embarcadero. I believe the 2801 California Street address is that of Chez Jacques, a fine club in its own right.

(2) I am appalled that the Great American Music Hall was omitted from the survey. A club whose pleasant atmosphere adapts itself for artists as diverse as Count Basie, David Bromberg and Gil Scott-Heron shouldn't be ignored.

(3) As far as theaters go I was distressed to see that four of the city's finest theaters were omitted. The Four Star is a small, but pleasant neighborhood theater which has a reputation for showing films that might otherwise not get shown, and there certainly can't be enough of this type of theater. They were the first to show Herzog's *Heart of Glass*, Sembene's *Ceddo* and Ridley Scott's *The Duellists* in a continuous run. The Four Star is at 23d Avenue and Clement Street, near Yet Wah, number 26 on Ms. Polt's map. The York near Potrero and 24th Street is, like the Castro, a restored 1920s movie palace. Its presentations change daily as do The Strand's on Market Street near the Civic Center. The Roxie, on 16th Street near Valencia is another small, informal theater that regularly shows Third World films such as *The Hour of the Furnaces*, and they recently showed *L'Age D'or*. Furthermore, these four theaters charge an admission price that puts all the other theaters in town to shame.

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currently in Huntsville,
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I was glad to see this issue that you have given a little more space to Waldo Lydecker (for Dish Night), but I do hope that Upfront and Coasting are returned to your pages next issue. A couple of pages of news / gossip never hurt anyone.

Mike Phillips
Tornado, WV

Secrets

I noticed your reference to *Secrets* in your June issue of *Take One*. For your information, Astronics / Tele-Cine, 90 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California has acquired exclusive rights to this movie. For your subscribers who wish to purchase *Secrets* on VHS or Beta Cassette formats they should write to the above address or call our Toll-Free number, 800 227-3248 or 800 227-3249, Toll-Free from anywhere in the USA except California, Alaska and Hawaii. Those who live in any of these three states can call our regular number which is (415) 673-4320.

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San Francisco, California

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TAKE ONE
is published monthly by Unicorn Publishing Corp., Box 1778, Station B, Montréal, Québec, Canada H3B 3L3 (514-843-7733).

Subscription Rates
North America, 12 issues for $9.00; Overseas, 12 issues for $15.00. Airmail: Add 75 cents per issue (North America) and $1 per issue (Overseas). Subscriptions sent free to individuals at prison addresses.

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Postmaster
Send address changes to **TAKE ONE** Magazine, P.O. Box 4932, Manchester, New Hampshire 03108. Postage paid at Montréal. Second Class postage paid at New York, New York and additional mailing offices. Printed in Canada.

Volume 7, number 4
Published March 15, 1979

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UPFRONT

But first, the news

You saw it here first. Best film of '78 at this year's Berlin Festival went to DER KLEINER GODARD, an 80-minute movie about political filmmaking and the politics of filmmaking. What's most extraordinary about the award is that *Godard* was shot in super-8. JAN DAWSON, *Take One*'s London correspondent and Berlin Fest honcho, reported on the film and its director, HELLMUTH COSTARD (German critics dubbed him der kleiner Godard when he first started making movies) in our November issue . . . A short note on some smaller films that may have gotten lost in the brouhaha over *The Deerhunter:* keep an eye out for Cuban director TOMAS (*Memories of Underdevelopment*) ALEA's *Los Sobrevivientes; ALAIN TANNER's Messidor,* coming what feels like a long time after *Jonas Who Will be 25 in the Year 2000;* And Hungarian KAROLY MAKK's *A Very Moral Might.* Makk's *Love* of a few years ago promised great things to come. . . . *Smart title of the year: Hot Laps,* a White Chapel production. 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And now-Dishnight

By Waldo Lydecker

BOOKS AND LYRICS: ROSE-y Bette Midler has just signed with Simon and Schuster to do a TRAVELS WITH MY AUNTish autobiography / travel book about her trek through Hawaii, Australia and Europe with her show. The Divine Miss M is also up for the remake of TWENTIETH CENTURY, playing the role which made Carole Lombard's reputation in Hollywood and ruined Madeleine Kahn's on Broadway. Insiders report that rumblings have been heard from Ms. Kahn's camp, where she is waging a campaign to use the movie version to prove that she really can get through a performance after all. Still on the book front, none other than Jackie Onassis, Doubleday editress, has been talking with Diana Ross about a book of her own. Ross, meanwhile, is readying for John Boorman's BODYGUARD this summer, possibly with Ryan O'Neal, who could also use a hit. Goldie Hawn will go the musical route as well when she essays the lead in the movie version of CHICAGO, which GREASE-y Allan Carr is producing. Is this the role that formerly bankable Liza Minnelli had her eye on for so long? Finally, Betty Bacall will make the transition from top of the best-seller lists to the Boards of Broadway when she stars in a musical version of the old Tracy-Hepburn starrer WOMAN OF THE YEAR, which Peter Stone is writing with Kander and Ebb, who created CABARET.

WHO were those five men who escorted Catherine Deneuve all over New York (including a stop at the Studio 54 party for Neal Travis' book MANHATTAN, after a much publicized incident which found the five guys darting into Studio, leaving Mlle. Deneuve behind to pay the cabfare)?

Milos Forman

HOW TO GET INTO THE MOVIES: Warners' John Calley, a regular at Elaine's, NYC's celebrity hangout, was handed a copy of Ron Rosenbaum's new thriller MURDER AT ELAINE'S by the proprietress herself and soon afterwards bought it as a project for Tom Mankiewicz, who just signed a two-picture deal with WB. The burning question now is, who does Elaine Kaufman see playing herself on screen? The burning answer—Are You Kidding?

ALL OVER TOWN: Neck-in-neck in the Most-Seen-Faces-of-the-Month Race are the unlikely duo of Christopher Reeve and Gilda Radner. Not together, however, even though they have been in the same room at the same time. Reeve was very visable at the premiere of the Twyla Tharp season at the Brooklyn Academy, emphasized by the fact that he was escorted by Lester Persky, a full head shorter, who had just signed Reeve for UA's THE BLUE PARROT. Almost immediately, however, Reeve was announced as the star of Universal's sci-fi romance BID TIME RETURN, based on Richard Matheson's novel, to be directed by Jeannot Szwarc. Gilda, who was recording a comedy album for Warners, was at the MURDER AT ELAINE'S party as well as the opening of Stephen Sondheim's SWEENEY TODD, where the puns at the post-performance party were all inspired by the play's plot—a murderous barber carves up his clients so that his ladyfriend can have fillings for her famous meat pies. Gregory Peck, fresh from not being nominated for an Oscar, was also in attendance, looking puzzled—he had just sunk some dough into the show as a favor to his pal, Bobby Fryer (who also produced BOYS FROM BRAZIL) when the budget skyrocketed.

Diana Ross

BANANAS: Wild and Crazy Steve Martin's next project may be TOP BANANA, an old Phil Silvers vehicle about a Milton Berle-ish television comedian of the 1950s. Michael Ritchie is interested in directing.

RELIEF: New Yorkers were spared the sight of Ali Macgraw reading the Lillian Hellman letter in ARE YOU NOW OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN? when the show closed moments before Ms. Macgraw's proposed theatrical debut, following in the hallowed footsteps of Liza Minnelli and Louise Lasser.

HAIRY: The authentic atmosphere of the 1960s bar mitzvah—at which you discovered that all your cousins were hippies too—was duplicated by Lester Persky and Michael Butler for the New York premiere of HAIR, held on a pier overlooking the Hudson River. Counter-culture golden oldies like Andy Warhol, Gerry Ragni and Rudolf Nureyev mingled with 1970s phenomena like John Curry, Steve Rubell and Diana Ross (a cross-over), while up-and-comers from the movie, especially Beverley D'Angelo, made bids for Least Camera Shy New Faces of the 1980s. The main diversion seems to have been deciding which after-party-party to try to crash, the Human Society benefit at Studio proving preferable, since Little Orphan Annie's dog, Sandy, was announced as planning to arrive in black tie.

Ali Macgraw

Here's-Coasting

By Todd Hackett

MOMENTOUS *MOMENT:* The momentous failure of MOMENT BY MOMENT has sent the careers of its two stars spinning, and trying to figure out where John Travolta and Lily Tomlin will land is Hollywood's latest guessing game.

Universal unexpectedly cancelled what was to be Tomlin's next film, THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN, for which extensive pre-production had already been done. John Landis, director of the hugely successful ANIMAL HOUSE, was brought in to direct SHRINKING WOMAN. He modified the script and put heavy emphasis on very costly special effects, shooting the projected budget way up over ten million dollars. We suspect that Universal got nervous about betting such a large bankroll on Tomlin, particularly so soon after the MOMENT debacle. But it seems the most significant reason for shelving the project was the noticeable antipathy between Landis and Tomlin. Tomlin may now step into Jane Fonda's NINE TO FIVE, a comedy about secretaries in an insurance company.

Meanwhile, John Travolta, two weeks away from starting his role in Paul Shrader's AMERICAN GIGOLO, suddenly stepped away from the project, claiming that he needed rest. Paramount was paying him 1.5 million dollars for the film, so the only way Travolta could avoid a monstrous lawsuit was to agree to make his next film at Paramount under the same terms.

With Richard Gere rushed into the leading role, GIGOLO's production staff began working day and night to cut the $8 million budget in half, since the promise of a film starring Gere and Lauren Hutton didn't get exhibitors panting with anticipation of huge box-office receipts. (You may recall that Gere also stepped into DAYS OF HEAVEN when Travolta found he couldn't do the picture due to conflicts with his network contract for "Welcome Back Kotter").

With Gere in the starring role, Paul Shrader may find himself with a less compromised film. Travolta and his manager Bob LeMond insisted on so many changes to minimize the film's salacious and sexual content that a better title would have been American Boy Scout.

After the success of SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER, Travolta formed Travolta Productions. Orion Pictures started financing the operation at considerable expense—including salaries for story editors, readers, lawyers, best friends, etc—all in the hopes of ending up with a Travolta movie under the Orion banner.

Due to interest on Travolta's part, Orion shelled out a half million dollars for the movie rights to a mediocre non-fiction book called PRINCE OF THE CITY, about an undercover narcotics cop in New York. David Rabe was brought in to write the script and Brian DePalma agreed to direct. Around the time of the GIGOLO cop-out, Travolta made it clear that he wouldn't do PRINCE OF THE CITY either, leaving Orion holding an extremely ordinary project—sort of a SERPICO meets THE FRIENDS OF EDDIE COYLE. At last report, Orion still planned to go ahead with the film, and are looking for a star.

Speculation intensified as to what

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further agreement Travolta would reach with Paramount to fulfill his commitment to the studio. Would Paramount take advantage of the situation to lure him into starring in GODFATHER III? Paramount had also entered into a deal with Travolta's manager LeMond to have LeMond produce for the studio. The first project they assigned him was INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE, which Paramount has been trying to get going for years. The studio hoped LeMond would bring Travolta into it.

Robert Evans has managed to entice Travolta into his film URBAN COWBOY, also for Paramount—a contemporary look at the day-to-day life of cowboy-types living in today's western cities and hanging out in country-style bars. Jim Bridges had already started directing the film, but producer Evans was willing to okay last-minute re-writes and re-shoots to rush Travolta into the picture.

DISASTER^2: SWARM showed us that the term "disaster movie" could be doubly descriptive. There are two more films on the horizon that just may prove worthy of the "disaster squared" category.

When shooting ended on Columbia's bat-disaster movie NIGHTWING, the editors had barely loaded the film on the editing machine before director Arthur Hiller flew the coop to begin shooting a new picture, THE IN-LAWS (starring Alan Arkin and Peter Falk). Most of the elaborate post-production on this special effects film was done in his absence. By the time editors had assembled a first-cut on NIGHTWING, Hiller had already finished shooting THE IN-LAWS. Hiller may be subscribing to that old philosophy of "getting another film in the can quick because this one could mean never working again."

John Travolta. All Hollywood's groping after him. Will he star in Godfather III?

Even worse problems befell AVALANCHE EXPRESS. Director Mark Robson died during production, and star Robert Shaw died before his looping could be done. Consequently, all of Shaw's dialogue in the film had to be dubbed with the voice of another actor. Someone close to the film who has seen results says "This one should run in about 500 theaters for about 5 minutes."

HANGING OUT: Another Italian-American superstar is having problems with his latest feature film, or I should say, his latest release. ITALIAN STALLION was filmed years before ROCKY, and Sylvester Stallone is not very happy about the current release of the soft-core porno film he made during his less privileged days. The film is already playing in certain suburban LA theaters. The new side of Stallone previously unexposed on film has been assessed by viewers as "average" in proportion.

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AT THE MOVIES

The Deer Hunter

Flabby beyond belief

By Jonathan Rosenbaum

"You beat me, baby," Francis Ford Coppola reportedly said to Michael Cimino, director of the $13 million *The Deer Hunter*, in reference to the fact that this new Vietnam atrocity movie has opened several months before Coppola's *Apocalypse Someday*. Considering the degree to which slick media and its prize monoliths now seem to rule most of our cultural and ethical discourse, I wonder whether Coppola might have said the same thing to the Reverend Jim Jones if, after the Guyana "suicides," the latter had still been around to receive the compliment. Maybe it's Jones after all who deserves the Oscars.

Try and imagine a boneless elephant sitting in your lap for three hours while you're trying to think. It's flabby beyond belief, convinced not only of its importance but of its relevance to Americans (i.e., human beings) everywhere, and even winds up bleating a mournful rendition of "God Bless America" in your ear, hoping that you'll join in or at least have sympathy for its plight. Waving its snout in your face, it asks you to suspend whatever precious intelligence that you have in exchange for a good cry about what nasty old Vietnam has done to poor beleaguered America. And in order for this to sing through your sinuses, you have to be stirred by its tear jerker premises, which derive from yet another unconsumated, macho all-male love story which puts more faith and value in violence than in women.

If only we could send this heavy grey lump off to school, or at least get it a respectable job in the circus. Unfortunately, it comes into our lives and neighborhood theatres with all the right social connections and credentials—a nod from the new-boy network of Coppola, Milius, Schrader, Scorsese and Spielberg—which means that even some colleagues of mine who dislike the film are capitulating to marketplace pressures and assigning it an aesthetic importance they wouldn't dream of doling out to a Dreyer or a Visconti.

You think I'm exaggerating? During the same period that *The Deer Hunter* was being press-shown in New York—before opening for a limited run in New York and Los Angeles, in order to qualify for the Oscars it is so nakedly salivating to

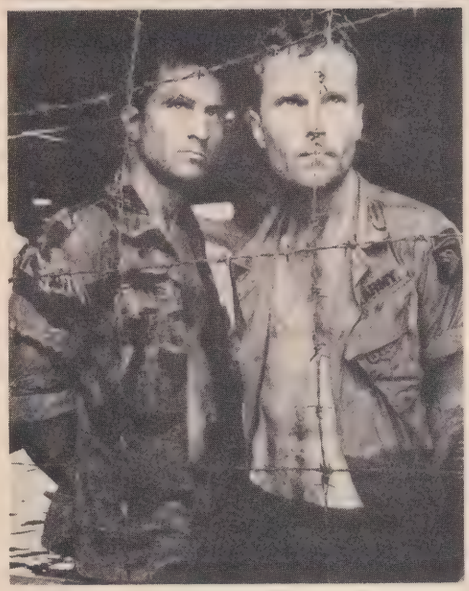
Michael Cimino

reap—I happened to hear that all the U.S. prints of Dreyer's *Gertrud* were being junked. Are we to conclude from this that a dull clinker in the national poet laureate sweepstakes is infinitely more important and meaningful to all of us? That's what the magazines keep telling us. And now that the most challenging European films are being virtually banned from and by the media, the expensive American art movie is being given the sweep of the market. (Is it any coincidence that *Interiors*, *Days of Heaven* and *The Deer Hunter* are all "heroic" movies about cripples?) Thus Pauline Kael is perfectly right in a way when she calls *The Deer Hunter* an "epic that is scaled to the spaciousness of America itself." If we read "America" as a code word for our shrinking film consciousness, I'd estimate that that's currently about two inches wide—at least in the preening mirror that media use to represent our collective face.

A personal confession seems in order. As someone who regards Coppola, Milius & Co. as talented men without a good solid pound of genius between them, I'm not likely to be awed by the high school diploma of one of their greener disciples. From the moment that Cimino's dull heroes (Robert De Niro, John Savage, Christopher Walken) make their exit from the steel factory in an imaginary Pennsylvania town, and De Niro starts laying on some jock mysticism about those "sun dogs" in the clouds—"old Indian things" that are supposed to portend dire events, apparently in the manner of Tolstoy—we already know that we're in for amateur night.

And when the director proceeds to lumber us through a Russian Orthodox wedding and a Vietnam send-off party for the heroes modelled on the *Godfather* bashes, the "richness of novelistic detail" usually adds up to about one simple idea per sagging shot, while the main instruction to actors and extras appears to have been "Look typical," perhaps in order to maintain this purity of intention. A folksy festive crowd gets dubbed by an all-male Dolby Russian choir, and after most of the beer-spraying chums drive off to the mountain to pursue their *Big Wednesday* capers, Cimino abruptly shifts to the style of a baby Leni Riefenstahl (or Daniel Schmidt) filming a remake of *Bambi* from the hunters' viewpoint. The heavenly male chorus resumes as De Niro sights his deer—which he kills in one shot, according to his profound mystic code. (Taking a second shot would be "pussy".)

Back in the bar, we're treated to a piano performance of Chopin (art, get it?)



De Niro and Savage—prisoners of war.

by one of the boys, and the camera pans interminably around the other guys' thoughtful faces—a stab at monumentality recalling Stalinist movies about Stalin, with Coppola again as the guide. Kael, who considers this movie "a small-minded film with greatness in it"—apparently believing in the greatness of small minds—proposes that if one of the men "had only fallen asleep the scene might have been as great as it wants to be." Mail-order recipes for greatness seem to be selling like hotcakes this season; it's too bad that dudes like Dreyer and Visconti still aren't to benefit from this sort of kindly advice.

Cut to Vietnam. It seems that what was so awful about this experience for Americans was principally a Russian Roulette game that Cimino himself apparently invented, although the movie credits it to the Vietcong. It consists of taking two prisoners and giving each one in turn a revolver with one bullet and five empty chambers, and slapping each prisoner until he points the gun at his head and fires (giving De Niro a chance to redo his *Taxi Driver* epiphany). To make things more sporting, cash bets are placed by the Vietcong on whether somebody does or doesn't splatter his brains on the table. If he does, the Vietcong laughs, like Ming the Merciless. It's a cute game all right, and Cimino is clearly so enamored with it as a suspense mechanism that he trots it out like a vaudeville routine whenever the action flags, knowing it'll be a show-stopper each time. ("One of the most frightening, unbearably tense sequences ever filmed," writes Jack Kroll, "and the most violent excoriation of violence in screen history"—real stuff for the troops.)

After trying this act out in the Vietnam provinces—where all three heroes have magically materialized, to be taken as prisoners and forced to play it—Cimino triumphantly takes it on the road and stages it for greasy foreign civilians in Saigon. Then back on the Pennsylvania mountain, after missing a second deer with the authority of a Zen master, De Niro, in a subsequent fit of pique, tries the game out on his buddy, played by John Cazale—regrettably wasted in his last screen performance. Then, for the grand finale, De Niro flies back to Saigon to retrieve Walken; he has to fork out a few thousand bucks in order to discover that his friend, crazed by his earlier experience of the game, now plays it for a living. (Three shows nightly?)

In an outrageously implausible maneuver designed to bring the house down, De Niro is forced to play the game with Walken in order to express his love for him. You think that's enough for an Oscar? Walken obediently splatters his brains out to give us our money's worth—and incidentally justify Stephen Saban's description of *The Deer Hunter* as "the cinematic equivalent of a Russian novel, a film more Russian than *Dr. Zhivago* ... possibly one of the best films ever made." Considering that it's Russian Roulette and that De Niro plays a character named Vronsky, how could it possibly be otherwise?

Jonathan Rosenbaum *is a New York freelance writer.*

The Silent Partner

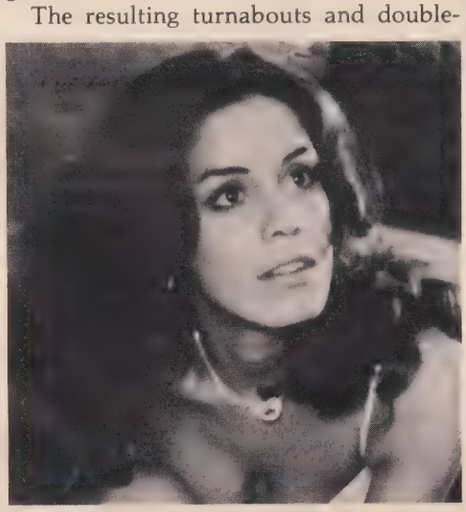
An incipient Fassbinder?

By Will Aitken

The Silent Partner is one of those nearly competent suspense pictures that somehow manage to come off better than a lot of the slicker competition. There's a pleasant sorcerer's apprentice feel to it all: Canadian director Daryl Duke is in way over his head a lot of the time, but half of the movie's fun—and much of its suspense—comes from trying to second-guess just what Duke will be able to bring off and what will explode in his face.

The script itself (adapted by Curtis Hanson from Anders Bodelson's novel *Think of a Number)* is serviceable enough as far as its basic situation goes. A mousey Toronto bank teller (Elliot Gould), inadvertently discovering his bank is going to be robbed, decides to cash in on the action by diverting most of the take to his own pocket just before the hold-up occurs. The remaining two-thirds of the movie details the increasingly violent games the teller and the sadistic robber (Christopher Plummer) play to gain ultimate control of the loot.

The resulting turnabouts and double-crosses are standard television fare, but Duke is best with these broad strokes; it's the details that really give him problems. A good hack director would know just what to hack off, easing the worst contradictions of plot and exposition with flashy editing and snappier dialogue.



Céline Lomez

As long as his stars are around—Gould, Plummer and Susannah York as Gould's bank colleage and intermittent love interest—Duke manages a semblance of control, or rather his principals create that illusion for him with their steady professionalism. When York and Gould play one on one, we get no sense of them being directed. Their timing is faultless, even the clumsiest lines ring true; they've been playing these kinds of roles long enough that no one has to tell them what to do. The minute Duke tries to pose them against a backdrop of secondary characters it's like we're watching a different movie—Gould and York cool and crisp in the foreground, obviously relaxed and enjoying themselves, while behind them a gaggle of speaking parts work their asses off enunciating and gesticulating as if this were their first job in the talkies (in Canada this is sometimes referred to as the CBC-dramatic-style).

There's a silly sit-com leer behind these group scenes (a busty young woman in Gould's bank wears a t-shirt reading Penalty For Early Withdrawal) that undermines what Duke is best at: atmosphere. His location shooting—the flat flourescent interior of the shopping mall bank, York's tight little apartment with its clumsy attempts at trendiness, the lakeside wedding of two bank employees—provides an accurate account of middle-class life in what must be North America's most thoroughly middle-class city.

The director's devotion to his drab milieu is convincing enough to get us past what at first feels like the shakiest premise of the movie—that two grown men would go to such brutal lengths for a payload of something less than $50,000 (especially given the current value of the Canadian dollar). Instead of guffawing when one of the characters wistfully explains that such a sum would bring "a new chance at life," we recognize that most of the people in *The Silent Partner* who say they're looking for a second chance would probably settle for a week in Key West.

When Duke tries to move from this setting to Plummer's criminal haunts, or when he attempts to show the violence of Plummer's world unsettling the foundations of Gould's, the picture fares less well. Plummer by himself, with his silver body jewelry and taut bottle-bronzed face, suggests the wages of sleaze, but Duke hasn't got the technical expertise to tap Plummer's viciousness. His best shot is Plummer's eyes glowing through the mail slot in Gould's apartment door. Plummer quietly seething is more menacing than Plummer unleashed.

What should be the violent centerpiece of the film—Plummer's revenge on his girlfriend (Céline Lomez) for betraying him, sexually and financially, with Gould—nearly shatters the film without ever quite shattering us. The scene scrapes by only because we imagine what a Coppola or a Scorsese or even an Altman (remember the Coke bottle scene in *The Long Goodbye?)* could do with sawing off a starlet's head on the jagged edge of Gould's broken aquarium. The violence isn't sylized or hyper-realistic, it's simply clumsy, full of obviously static compositions.

Newcomer Céline Lomez deserves a better-orchestrated end. Certainly her performance up to this point has been scored just short of trumpet flourishes. She's being groomed as Canada's new superstarlet (Margot Kidder and Carole Laure serve as earlier, successful models), and everyone from the local press to the director wants to make as much of her as possible, but the camera accomplishes that just by focussing on her. She's as dark and sleek as Laure, but friskier, even distractingly coltish in her early scenes when no one seems to have told her to play anything more than a starlet.

Lomez's talent is for comedy but she can be funny and wrenchingly erotic at the same time. Her one memorable scene comes when she and Gould team up to further deceive his bank and Plummer, her erstwhile lover. Called upon to impersonate a chic career woman ten years her senior, Lomez hides behind a single's perm and tinted designer glasses wide enough to balance her mouth. This disguise frees her from the starlet pose and she acts with her whole leggy body. For once she and Gould meet on a common ground; the sheer giddy pleasure they take from her unexpected transformation carries the movie beyond any place we ever expected it to go.

A friend suggested the technical ineptitude and script problems of the movie aren't half so distracting if you think of Duke as an incipient Fassbinder rather than a failed Sirk. Whatever the case, *The Silent Partner* feels like a perfect fifties film for the last lap of the seventies. All its main characters wear masks of one sort or another—Gould poses as the harmless bank teller whose greatest thrill is collecting tropical fish, Lomez tricks herself out as a well-heeled sophisticate, York continues to glow with slightly maternal wholesomeness even after she becomes Gould's accessory after the fact and Plummer robs Gould's bank first got up as Santa Claus and later in matronly drag. This may have been a dull decade of propriety and pretention but, *The Silent Partner* assures us, beneath our complacent exteriors we're all longing for lust, loot and blood.

Will Aitken *is* Take One's *Associate Editor.*

Love on the Run

The last Doinel

By Annette Insdorf

During the 1950s, a feisty young critic at *Cahiers du Cinéma* named François Truffaut dared to champion Hollywood directors like Hitchcock and Hawks (who were at that time hardly "respectable" in America). In February of 1979, the American Film Institute repayed the cross-cultural debt a bit, honoring Truffaut on his twentieth anniversary as a filmmaker. The forty-seven-year old French director made personal appearances in Washington and Los Angeles, launching a comprehensive retrospective of his films with the American premiere of *Love on the Run* (which will be released in April by New World).

Love on the Run (*L'Amour en fuite*) is Truffaut's twentieth film—the fifth one built around Antoine Doinel, the semi-autobiographical character who first touched screen audiences in *The 400 Blows* (1959). Truffaut claims it is also the last of the series, which evolved through "Antoine and Colette" (the French sketch of *Love at Twenty*, 1962), *Stolen Kisses* (1968), and *Bed and Board* (1971)—always starring Jean-Pierre Léaud. This point of resolution was heightened by the AFI Retrospective, which paid homage to Truffaut on the twentieth anniversary of *The 400 Blows*. *Love on the the Run* seemed almost made to order for opening night in both cities, as it reconstructed the cinematic universe that is unquestionably Truffaut's.

What makes *Love on the Run* remarkable is the interweaving of flashbacks which in effect present the past of its characters. Truffaut "quotes" from his earlier films, and this permits us to follow not only Jean-Pierre Léaud, but the young actresses from "Antoine and Colette", *Stolen Kisses*, and *Bed and Board* in their movement through adolescence. During

OVERLOOKED & UNDERRATED

Shock Waves

Shock Waves. Director, Ken Wiederhorn (1976)

This is one of the best horror movies in years, creating an exhilarating shock-force powerful enough to jolt even hardcore fans of the genre. The plot is merely another spinoff from *Night of the Living Dead*, and it's all rather empty-headed, but it *is* a genuinely scary film that manages to avoid the sick sadism of most other recent thrillers, and is therefore something of a rarity: it's the first effective "tasteful" fright film since John Hough's *Legend of Hell House*.

Wiederhorn's sure sense of pace and composition belie the low budget, as does Reuben Trane's gorgeous photography, and the performers, including Peter Cushing, Brooke Adams and John Carradin are all restrained enough to make their hysterical characters appear reasonably credible. Wiederhorn's work here marks him as a man worthy of attention and I hope the same critics who have heaped praise upon blood-thirsty no-talents like David Cronenberg and Alfred Sole will take a look at this movie and seriously analyze Wiederhorn's potential. Why they have not already done so is truly mysterious, for Wiederhorn promises to be an important addition to the thriller form.

Dan Humenick

Truffaut directs Jean-Pierre Léaud in Love on the Run.

the question-answer period that followed the American premiere of his latest film, Truffaut explained that he took advantage of having filmed these individuals at various stages: "I didn't have to search for a child actor to play young Antoine Doinel; he already existed on screen. This is a rare opportunity in cinema;the only comparable situation would be to have Mickey Rooney today playing Andy Hardy!"

The inspiration to make *Love on the Run* came, curiously enough, from Copenhagen, where movie theaters are assigned by the government to individuals in the arts. Henning Carlsen, the director of *Hunger*, inherited the Dagmar Theater which had been Carl Dreyer's until his death. A few years ago, Carlsen ran an "Antoine Doinel Day"—*The 400 Blows* at 2:00, "Antoine and Colette" at 4:00, etc. —and viewers who had the patience could witness this character grow up, fall in love, and age before their eyes, all in one day. When Truffaut heard this story, he was seized by the desire to make a last Doinel film.

Antoine is now in his late 30s, divorcing from Christine (Claude Jade) who remains a good friend, and writing his second novel. (He also works in a printing plant, and when he wakes up at his desk one morning, we can recall how the printing plant was a place of refuge for the runaway of Truffaut's first film.) In the course of *Love on the Run*, Antoine has a series of encounters that lead him to relive moments from his past, and to come to terms with them. He runs into Colette (Marie-France Pisier, who also collaborated on the screenplay), with whom he was infatuated in *Love at Twenty*, and Liliane (Dani), his girlfriend in *Day for Night* (although Léaud's character there is called Alphonse). And he meets Monsieur Lucien (Julien Bertheau), who was his mother's devoted lover for many years; this sequence is a troubling and haunting one, as Antoine is led to accept a mother (now dead) who never really accepted him.

But not all of *Love on the Run* is remembrance of things past. Antoine's new love is Sabine (played by the delightful French television announcer Dorothée in her film debut). As Truffaut wryly pointed out, "in order for the ending to be not too sad, I had to introduce a new woman."

What makes this filmic mosaic so

OVERLOOKED & UNDERRATED

How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman

How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman, directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos (Brazil, 1971).

This black comedy from the Cinema Novo movement was apparently received with great indignation at Cannes, and has seldom been seen or discussed since. However, after two viewings (thanks to the Honors College Series at the University of Missouri and Ohio State's Film Arts Society) I am convinced that dos Santos has wryly—and brilliantly—reworked the theme of oppressive imperialism.

Essentially, the story is about a Frenchman taken prisoner by a tribe of naked cannibals; he is sentenced to death (to be eaten at the eighth moon), because the natives take him for an enemy Portuguese instead of a "friendly" French colonist. This is only one of many sly reversals: not only do white Europeans all look alike, but whereas colonists force clothes on the natives before exploiting their natural resources, the prisoner soon strips and shaves and then sells his knowledge of artillery for war with a rival tribe—all to placate his captors. Nevertheless, the natives are not put on the level of the colonists, because they remain completely guileless—nakedly guileless, if you will. The voice-over of a missionary's condescending and altruistic letters home never matches what we see to be true. The cannibals' words and actions, however blunt or violent, are always straightforward rather than duplicitous, and justified by law and custom rather than motivated by greed.

The handsomely sun-burned natives and the lush countryside are indeed attractive. A shot near the end of a lovely woman looking directly into the camera as she eats—a shot that resembles an airline poster that would sell us a tropical vacation—is a further allurement. What is in her mouth, though, is dos Santos' final comment on this relationship between consumer and consumed.

James Griffith

appropriate for the Retrospective is that it spans not only the Doinel cycle, but Truffaut's obliquely personal "dramatic comedies" from *Shoot the Piano Player* to *The Man Who Loved Women*. Beyond the fact that there are clips from films outside the series—*Day for Night, Such A Gorgeous Kid Like Me, The Man Who Loved Women*—Antoine extends the portrait of skirt-chaser Bertrand Morane: the hero is a writer surrounded by a variety of attractive women who invariably prove stronger and wiser than he. When asked to comment on this by female admirers at the Los Angeles screening, Truffaut shied away from labels like role-reversal and focused on emotional drama: "My films share a basic tension, between characters who can accept the provisional or temporary nature of love, and those who demand that love be definitive. Of course we see the absolutists as mad; yet we admire them because we sense behind the madness a certain purity. They have gone to the extreme of their emotions."

Twenty years after lighting a candle to Balzac (and setting his room on fire), Antoine remains a romantic. His amorous experiences are still highly literary, theatrical, or at least extreme: he pursues Sabine less like a lover than a detective (his profession in *Stolen Kisses*), or an artist infatuated with his creation. After jumping onto a moving train in which he glimpsed Colette, Antoine recounts to her the "fictional" basis for his next novel: in a telephone booth, a man finds the torn fragments of a woman's photo; he pieces them together, falls in love with the image, and tries to find the woman. We see Antoine acting this out while narrating (but twice he "steps out of the frame" by speaking directly to the camera from the phone booth). The playful self-consciousness is embellished when Antoine subsequently tells Sabine the same story—only this time he is confessing that it was *her* face, and that his "fiction" was in fact quite real. The film's multiple points of view thus overlap through Truffaut's typically intricate narrative structuring.

Antoine's act of piecing together the image is a delectable objective correlative for the editing that is so central to this particular cinematic collage (and its mixture of "real" and "false" flashbacks). Unlike the linear progression of *The Story of Adèle H.* and *The Green Room*, the kaleidoscopic bits of *Love on the Run* required a lengthy sixteen weeks of montage. "The problem was to harmonize disparate material, to not lose the thread..." Truffaut admitted.

One of his solutions was unity of sound, particularly the continuity provided by voice-over narration: Antoine and the other characters are constantly telling stories. The verbal commentaries function both as a formal linking device, and an illustration of a prevalent theme in Truffaut's work: the delight in—or need to—tell one's tale, and ultimately to recollect and revise one's past. Antoine's autobiographical novel, moreover, points to Truffaut's own creative enterprise, for it actually records the Antoine Doinel cycle in book form. When Colette opens the book, there is a cut to a painful scene from *The 400 Blows* which ends in Antoine's being slapped—leading to Colette's slamming the book shut. Printed text and moving celluloid interanimate one another throughout *Love on the Run*, as word engenders picture, and images embrace what can be spoken or written.

In addition, Antoine's job as a proofreader allows for reverent shots in the printing plant, as the camera acknowledges the mechanical processes involved in creation. The last scene of the film conveys the exhilaration shared by making art and making love, as the camera pans increasingly faster from Antoine and Sabine kissing, to an unknown couple in the same act, and then to the scene in *The 400 Blows* where Antoine rides in the whirling rotor: this joy of movement is no less an image of cinema itself, as the rotor recalls the kinetoscope (precursor of film). The dizzying visual rhyme blends past and present, characters and camera, kinetics and kisses—and the love of images on the run.

Annette Insdorf *was Truffaut's interpreter during the AFI Retrospective, and is the author of* François Truffaut (*Twayne*).

The films of Howard Guttenplan

By Bob Cowan

Howard Guttenplan is the director of the Millennium Film Workshop in New York. Prior to this he worked as a freelance graphic designer and illustrator, until 1968, at which time he organized and structured what continues today to be one of the most important showcases for personal and independent films existing anywhere in the world. His own films can be superficially called diary or home movie type films.

Unlike similar works by others who never seem to rise above the self-consciously sentimental and nostalgic, Guttenplan's films are highly structured. The subject matter is seen with a very conscious painterly eye. His films cannot be classified as documentary either, for they contain a strong concern for texture and color that supersedes any mere recording of the external world.

In *New York Diary 74, European Diary 71* and various other films, the images are fragmented and dispersed, but full of a feeling of natural eye movements and quick observations. Sweeps, pans and zooms fly by rapidly. The various locations are not recorded as sentimental reminders of pleasurable visits, but are in the final analysis captured moments of awareness of contrasting textures, forms and color as seen spontaneously during his walks with the camera. The people walking by seem almost choreographed. They create patterns for the eye to the same extent as the inanimate objects do. Rich densities of color-contrasts are placed adjacent to each other. Sometimes a solid field of color will be juxtaposed with a short burst of fragmented movement only to return to a solid color field again. Slow movements, fast movements, no movement at all are unified into a total pattern. Shifting movements composed within the limits of the frame area are contrasted with

OVERLOOKED & UNDERRATED

The Squeeze

The Squeeze. Director, Michael Apted. The plot of this energetic thriller matters much less than the fact that it's one of the few London-location movies in recent years that really does give an accurate view of what the greater part of the city (i.e., the bits that tourists don't see) looks like. It's also one of the very small number of movies that conveys without underlining or condescension the fact that Britain is a multi-racial community. There's some good, crisp action and for once the stock figure of the alcoholic detective actually is an alcoholic, given to throwing up on the pavements and diving into the nearest pub at times of stress. Stacy Keach is rather wierdly cast in this role (the character is a working-class Londoner), but the real acting surprise is Stephen Boyd, proving in his last movie that he could have been a brilliant character actor if only he hadn't wasted his time on the star trip. His manic Irish gang-boss-cum-social-climber is genuinely scary.

Pierre Greenfield

verticals, softness against hardness, shadow images against real images.

Guttenplan knows exactly when to cut away from one to the other. He creates a visual flow of rich impressions of singular intensity. There are always surprises. Is it a blue sky, or merely a small blue patch of color on a wall? Real objects and their shadows intermingle to such an extent that it is difficult to tell where one leaves off and the other begins. The compositional space of the framed image is shifted and divided in every possible way. At times closeup and far shot become interchangeable; small clusters of repeated patterns grow and develop into larger ones with the speed and nervous twitches of an artist's brush.

The formal concerns of the final edited versions of his films are for the most part purely visual and graphic rather than intellectual. After viewing an entire program, one comes away not with memories of specific locations where the shooting was done, but rather with the feeling that one has experienced a journey through his mind's eye.

Bob Cowan *is a Canadian prize-winning filmmaker living and working in Brooklyn.*

Always for Pleasure

Music and festival

By Pat Aufderheide

Les Blank travels through other people's cultures by making movies. His films are an empathetic, outsider's view of regional American cultures. Moreover, they are, by implicit comparison, a criticism of industrial life for its speed, its forgetfulness, and for its denial of tradition.

Blank, who spent years making industrial films and who bears tokens of a counter-cultural life, does more than capture vanishing folkways in his films. He also expresses, for a generation and for a class, a bewildering sense of loss.

Blank focuses on music in the small and disappearing pockets of regional cultures in the United States. Texas blues guitar (*The Blues Accordin' to Lighnin' Hopkins; A Well-Spent Life*) Cajun fiddling (*Dry Wood*); Cajun accordion (*Hot Pepper*); norteno accordion (*Chulas Fronteras*)—the music opens the door to a different world. Blank makes a foreign culture intelligible without ever denying its separateness.

His most recent film, *Always for Pleasure*, follows one of the Mardi Gras parade groups through the streets of New Orleans. We watch the dancing in the streets as the camera eye ranges from eye to ass level. We see, as a jazz funeral (complete with parade and band) makes clear, how dancing and street rituals are integral to a way of life—and death. ("This is how I want to go out," says one member of the funky procession, "with a little band behind me and my friends havin' a good time.") We watch St. Patrick's Day celebrations, marked by parades, music and street rowdiness, in white working class neighborhoods.

A wild sexual joy pulsates from the screen. We never feel that the film exploits the energetic dancers, or that it exercises a prurient eye. Rather, it captures almost naïvely—at face value, at the level of the meaning intended—the exuberant display of the revellers.

These are people who not only love to dance, but who do it seriously. They practice parade formations, they compete with other clubs, they design clothing, they spend huge amounts of money on elaborate parade outfits. Dance and festival symbolize an intricate social competition, and we see it respectfully, in part because of Blank's matter-of-fact film style. Like his other films, *Always for Pleasure* depends on simplicity rather than artfulness.

Mardi Gras street scene. People who not only love to dance, but who do it seriously.

Blank enters the worlds he reveals through music and festival, and so is able to project a particularly cheerful and sustaining view of life. He shows how music is integral to a particular community. Not that it's all cheerful energy in these documentaries—they also show how these regional cultures are shrinking. People explain, in interviews, the high cost of isolation: there is too little for everyone. One woman says, in *Dry Wood*, "Now life is too fast. As the children grow up there's no jobs, nothin' for them to do... They're leavin' one by one."

If Blank avoids romanticizing while focusing on festive aspects of a regional culture, it is because he lets the people he films show and tell him how it works. He is a quiet and receptive visitor, with enough respect for his hosts to let them tell the story. Asked how he managed to get such forthright entry to the homes and lives of two bluesmen (in *The Blues According to Lightin' Hopkins* and *A Well-Spent Life*), he explained cooly, "Mainly I tried not to shoot when they weren't accepting me—which was most of the time. Then I left out the footage they didn't accept, which was most of it."

Blank always makes his point musically. He remembers a documentary he made on a rock star, a film unflattering enough to the star and his companions that the star prohibited the release of the film. "Rock 'n' roll tries to imitate regional music," Blank says. "A lot of rock musicians, for instance, have used blues to heighten their effect. But they're not speaking to a culture that grew up with it. When the Cajun kids go to a dance, the music they dance to is the very same music that their moms and dads sang on the porch at home."

The big city Mardi Gras suggests less about the conditions of daily life than does the rural Mardi Gras of *Dry Wood*, but *Always for Pleasure* still communicates an abandoned joy and raises the question of why that feeling should be such an occasional sensation for so many of us. Through this film as in Blank's other documentaries, we share a glimpse of a world in which work and play still belong to the same universe, and where play means more than distraction and escape.

Pat Aufderheide *is a Chicago freelance writer, and the political editor of* In These Times.

ENCORE

Rebel without a cause

By David Thomson

Rebel Without a Cause is now as old as Dean was when he made it. The intervening period saw so many fresh hopes betrayed or misled, that "rebel" sounds quaint and earnest. Those 20 years were convulsed with rock and roll, the remorseless advance of TV which would not be prevented by even Ray's CinemaScope, the Kennedys and Warhol, Asia and Africa, Godard and Ali, the Stones and the stoned, Watergate and water beds—a decade of upheaval, and its daunted aftermath in which we relearned accepted practice, the scramble for position and the cultivation of small comforts. Dean has been succeeded by a generation of dark, bristling loner-studs, culminating in John Travolta, whose *Grease* is bathed in the camp glare of '50s California and a high school just as strangely enrolled with morose adults as Jim Stark's one-day ordeal.

Sal Mineo is dead, from something like the chaos of one blue sock and one red. Natalie Wood is the talk-show companion of her recurring husband, Robert Wagner, whose other claim to fame is that he still looks like 1955. Dennis Hopper has gone through glory and oblivion and emerged a beatnik Nosferatu. Nick Adams is dead. Corey Allen sometimes directs. Yet Nicholas Ray has taken on his waiting shoulders—desperately ardent shoulders—all the burden of the misundertood outcast. Not long ago, *Take One* carried a major interview with him and a cover painting of a bowed head, with black eye-patch and wild white hair. For a movie magazine, a painting suggested that Ray was too rare for photography. That was the January, 1977 issue, and it hoped that Ray would soon have a finished film. The hope remains, but in the interim Ray has fought a grim battle with cancer, and only extended the dark legend of a wounded poet at odds with fate, a chronic stranger to calm.

Rebel was always a mass of contradictions: the high school kids who were all too old; the virulent loathing of cardboard suburbia, so lurid in Warner color, and the contempt which indulged a wistful, brooding loneliness of the spirit that marks all of Ray's heroes. It is a violent disavowal of Eisenhower's middle class and the stupid fear that makes them flinch from so many threats—remember how Natalie Wood's father is pierced and disgusted when she kisses him on the lips? Yet the ending surely suggests that Jim and Judy long to curl up together in some close-carpeted bungalow. They are unaware how close their idyll at the deserted mansion comes to a dream of domesticity enlightened by True Love. And the film is marred by one restriction of its times—that these retarded adults maybe just needed to screw away their troubles, but were prevented by censorship. It might be a more intelligent but sour film if the melodrama receded, if Jim and Judy had a one-night ball, Jim drifted back to school to become a dutiful aerospace engineer, or a teacher on cortisone, while Plato made it as a Beverly Hills agent.

Ray could not let that much real sociology distract him from what he called "the more sweepingly developed conflict that I was searching for." *Rebel* transcends the mid-'50s juvenile lifestyle with the soulful anguish of Rimbaud and the romance of self-destruction. No wonder Jim croons Wagner at the police station. He has a destiny, and this is a movie about death and transfiguration: the ecstatic cliff-top chicken run; the moonlit brink and the turmoil of ocean; the whirling fire that comes out of the planetarium sky; and the stylistic earthquake when Plato is picked off by implacable Furies in black, so far beyond the control of a well-intentioned parole officer named Ray.

It was Ray who insisted that the action should return to the planetarium and who fixed the movie's soul in its epic perspective, a space that no leaden-brained astronauts would ever trample. Compared with the precinct zoo, the haunted mansion and the madhouse domestic interiors, the planetarium is as solemn and grandiose as an art gallery or a concert hall. (It is a Xanadu; no wonder Nick Ray arrives there as police cars scream off into the dawn.) It makes *Rebel* a substantially nineteenth-century film, a twilight of the gods for young adults kept in the fetters of home and school by a neurotic society. It really *is* a movie about a 23-year-old genius packed off to school with peanut butter sandwiches. The casting cheat reveals the dramatic plight of a maturity too great for the anxious parents—we guess immediately that Jim gets drunk because he is too wise for his cartoon family, and more experienced than they will ever dream of being. The romanticism that trembles in all those dynamic compositions is of a private knowledge, too precious, fine and foreboding for a coarse world set on consumer values. Ray was years ahead of his time, scorning the middle class's

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That's what tickled Dean's cool superiority, and makes it his most intriguing film. It was never about a rebel without a cause, or a helplessly confused kid. The plea for one clear day is a feeble gesture of self-pity and dismay at never being able to explain the real yearning. Dean prowls through the picture with his director's graceful secrecy. Jim Stark is so much more self-possessed than his parents; so much more compelled by the lovely but dangerous mysteries of existence. He must have read "Howl!" and heard Miles Davis. His reticent face holds answers. He has the bullets at the end; he has the compact and the sensitivity Judy has never encountered; he alone could calm Plato; just before death he won the respect of Buzz. He has an instinct for commitment and risk that would not shame Bogart in *In a Lonely Place* or Mitchum in *The Lusty Men*. He is as resigned to stupidity, self-seeking and bad luck as Burton in *Bitter Victory*. He mocks himself that his knowledge can never be trusted to communication. The hero will die with it intact, a wounding authority that will destroy him. If there was a special closeness between Ray and Dean it was that sensibility. But it is a defect in the film as well as a bonus, for the silent pact permits incoherence and pretension and makes pain a function of destiny and loneliness an inviolate retreat.

So *Rebel* is vibrant with yearning aspirations, and Ray's beautiful and brave venturing with space, decor and faces lost in a night wilderness of screen. We can never regain the view we had of the film in 1955, when its rueful passion swept so many of us away. But from 1979 it still looks like a crucial Hollywood movie, a stew of stereotypes and private vision, a hash of melodrama and poetry—*All My Children* and *Les Enfants Terribles*. I wonder if its enduring vividness is not the result of a talent working under constraints. Just as Dean's Jim needed obtuse parents to be defined, so Ray may have been the classic example of an American director abused but shaped by the philistinism of Hollywood. It is not often noticed that his silence has coincided with an age of new freedom for American directors. Great romantics may need cruel prisons, otherwise their aura of self-destructive agony might be exposed by the test of real liberty. *Rebel* is the film of a spirit incapable of earthly compromise and, therefore, lunging towards the kindly fire that rushes out of space, or from the convenient metaphor of a planetarium screen.

David Thomson *is the author of* The Biographical Dictionary of Film.

ON THE SET WITH THE MUPPETS

By David Colker & Jack Viertel

DATELINE—HOLLYWOOD: Chaos has erupted on the set of *The Muppet Movie*—Now three in the afternoon and Miss Piggy has not emerged from her trailer since seven-thirty a.m., after taking an unceremonius poke at a make-up person who, she claimed, had over-powdered her snout. Kermit the Frog hops angrily back and forth, holding a phone receiver against his cheek and gesturing wildly with his free web.

"I don't care how sweet the package is!" he shouts. "I'm not working with Marty Scorsese! I'd rather be used for bait!"

He slams down the phone and stalks off at a fair hop, gesturing with disgust at the trailer where his costar is closeted.

"Call me when the bitch gets over her crying jag. I'll be in the sauna."

Sound phony? Well, what do you expect? What can be said about the muppets? That they are the cutest, darn-tootenist little clutch of lovable rascals you ever did set eyes upon? Hardly. The muppets are, in fact, scary. They have bled into our consciousness so totally, that even lined up on sticks, hanging in positions that can only suggest multiple fracture wounds, they seem alive.

Under the auspices of Sir Lew Grade—Lord Grade to his friends—the muppets have their own series on syndicated TV, and now they're making a movie. It details the cross-country journey of Kermit the Frog from his Florida swamp home to Hollywood, where he and the other muppets he has picked up along the way star in a big budget musical movie, produced by a character who looks suspiciously like Lord Grade. The movie is about—you guessed it—the cross-country journey of Kermit the Frog from his Florida swamp home... etc., etc.

The Muppet Movie has human stars, too: Charles Durning and Austin Pendleton. A host of celebrities appear in cameo roles, including Mel Brooks, Steve Martin, Orson Welles, Madeline Kahn and others. But it is the muppets who are the muscle in this production. Jim Henson, their creator and Kermit's real-life persona is the producer of record, and the director, James Frawley (*The Big Bus, Kid Blue*) is in consultation with him before and after every rehearsal and take. Frawley denies that there is any tension between them, but admits that "We've made compromises, in terms of what I wanted, and what Jim wanted, and what's possible to do in a movie of this type. You always make compromises."

The peculiarities of *The Muppet Movie*

are many, both technically and in performance. Many of the major sets have been built with floors five feet off the ground, so that the muppeteers can maneuver underneath without undue discomfort. Each muppeteer watches his muppet's performance on a closed circuit TV, since he cannot see first hand what is going on above the floor, and electronics are clearly the order of the day. So much about the muppets is technical, in fact, that it's hard to understand how they remain so human, or alive, or whatever it is that they are. But their "humanity" has proved to be one of Frawley's biggest headaches.

"I keep *directing* them," he explains. "I keep clearing the sight line between me and Kermit so I can talk to him. It's ridiculous. I have to keep telling myself, 'If you want Kermit to do something, you have to talk to Jim. Don't talk to Kermit! Kermit's not real.' "

Frawley isn't the only one with this problem. A visitor to the set was caught watching for Kermit's reaction to a tape playback of one take, and had to be reminded that Kermit was in fact lying lifeless on Henson's knee while Henson watched the playback. Another visitor gave off a visible shudder when shown the muppet repair table, where arms, legs and eyes are strewn with grisly abandon.

How do the muppeteers like the movie business?

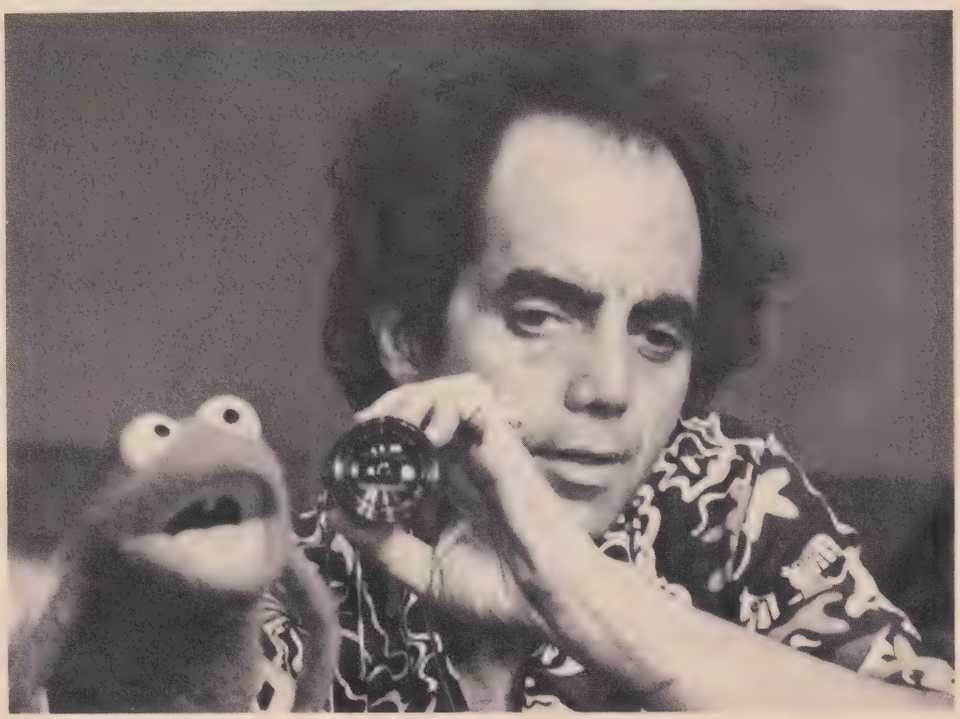
"Here," explains Frank Oz (Miss Piggy to you)," you have all the time to do all the things that get compromised out of existence on the TV show. It's slower here, but it's so much more gratifying. You can take the time to set up a shot three different ways. You can stop after a take if something is bothering you. The results are infinitely more pleasing."

Oz, a cheerful, tall, prematurely bald man, has been working with the muppets for fifteen years. He and Henson speak in an almost private language of jovial insult and innuendo. Their communication is so inbred, in fact, that when they get down to business it surges up through their arms and into the muppets they operate. Characteristically, Oz is reluctant to talk about the process, which seems almost magical to an outsider. After watching three takes of the same shot, each with a distinctly different emotional feel, we pressed him for details.

"We screw around a lot," he explained. "We know each other real well, and we screw around with the way they move, and pretty soon we get it right. That's all."

Although Frawley appears to have a tight hold on the movement of the movie itself, he does not interfere when the muppeteers are conferring among themselves. The ideas that come up between takes are dished around, used or

Clockwise from above: Jim Henson, Frank Oz and James Frawley consult; Kermit plays the banjo in his southern swamp home; Frawley and the muppet created for him as a birthday present; Sweetums gets a peek at the filmmakers' side of the camera; Frawley lines up a shot over Robin the Frog's shoulder; Frawley directs Fozzie Bear in a driving scene.



discarded, without Frawley's intervention. They are not part of what he sees as his responsibility.

"Even though this is an unusual movie," he said during lunch break, "in that it's about muppets and people, instead of just people, I still see it very much as my movie. It's about a theme that's very close to me: the energy of groups of people coming together. Kermit picks up the other muppets along the way, in different places, so it becomes a kind of road movie, too. I'm very involved in that group emotion. In a sense, everything I do is about that. So this movie, if you want to take an auteur look at it, it definitely fits with me. The characters, many of them, aren't human beings. But they function without being animals either. To me they are just *characters*, no different from any other characters in a movie. The fact that they aren't human is just one characteristic we have to deal with, the same as any character who has any particular characteristic. It also has many things about Hollywood in it that are close to my heart. It has a bar that's the bar from every *Casablanca* movie ever made, and a lot of other things that are little tributes to the movies I was nourished on."

Frawley's ability to project his personal touch into the muppet movie was enhanced, no doubt, by his work on the project from its inception.

"I went over to England," he explained, "with a little sound/super 8 camera, and we just tried some things. We went out and shot some film with the muppets, and we talked. They liked the results, so I've been involved ever since—beginning with rewrites, and always with conversation about what we had in mind for this production. I think the result is that we've got what we want, and it's something very special. I think the kids will love it, but I never think of kids when I'm making it. I just think of the movie: it's a piece of work, a very special and particular kind of a piece of work."

The muppets should grace the screen for the first time around Easter, if all goes well in post-production. Lord Grade, who has been enormously successful with the televised muppets, will now get a chance to test their durability for a paying audience. There is little doubt that the rewards will be handsome for all concerned, but a nagging question remains: those muppets, hanging alone on their little posts, their faces blissfully uncreased by the worry that affects humans, waiting for a comforting arm to animate them, seeming so much at peace on the racks that have been provided for their comfort... what are they going to do with all that money?

David Colker *and* **Jack Viertel** *are Los Angeles freelancers and frequent* Take One *contributors.*

LA LAURE

Canada wasn't very good to Carole Laure. Now that "Get Out Your Handkerchiefs" has hit the big time, Canadians (and just about everyone else) are sitting up and taking a great deal of notice.

By David Overbey

Carole Laure when asked about stardom is fond of quoting Buster Keaton: "As long as Tibetan peasants can't spell your name, you aren't a star." By those standards, Laure isn't yet a star (who is?), but by less severe criteria she is at least well on her way. Of course she has long been known by cinéphiles in Québec, Cannes, and Paris, but in the last year "La Belle Carole" has been slowly but surely developing into "La Laure" with a solid reputation as an actress in the four films she has made in France without her erstwhile mentor Gilles Carle, and as a singer-actress-dancer from her musical show with Lewis Furey at Paris' La Palace. That reputation is growing with the critical and commercial success of Bertrand Blier's *Preparez vos mouchoirs* in North America, the popularity of her new album, and the restaging of the Laure-Furey collaboration this spring at Paris' prestigious music hall Bobino. The lady is busy. The telephone never stopped ringing until she took it off the hook so we could talk without interruption one morning in the apartment she shares with Lewis Furey not far from the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. "La Belle Carole" is still very "belle" indeed (and can fill a pair of Levis like no one this side of Tuesday Weld), but you only have to talk to her for a minute and watch her eyes to see that there is a practical and clever brain telling that body what to do. She began by doing a bit of interviewing herself, expressing some surprise that the most I could claim was to be an "honorary Canadian": "But *Take One* is Canadian, and you work sometimes in Toronto? You live here then?"

D.O. Yes. Like you, I live here, but move around a lot.

C.L. Yes, I live everywhere. I thought I lived in Paris, but I'm never here.

You just got back from promoting Blier's film in New York and from shooting Marice Dugowson's Au revoir, à lundi *in Montréal?*

Yes. It's a French film, however. It was shot in Montréal. There's a lot of shooting there now because of the tax breaks and because of the dollar's devaluation. A budget in francs becomes enormous if you change it into dollars, even American dollars. In some ways that is good for us there because it means more work for film people I suppose. There are a lot of co-productions now—with France, England, America, even Germany.

Tell me about the film. Denise Filliatrault is in it, isn't she?

Yes, although I don't think she would insist too much on that. She is a great talent and a leading actress, but she only did one day's shooting, for fun and because she likes Dugowson. It is based on a Canadian novel by Roger Fournier, *Moi, mon corps, mon âme, Montréal, etc,* which Dugowson adapted himself. It is about two girl friends living together. A French woman, played by Miou-Miou, who has been in Montréal since Expo '67, and a Québécoise, me. It is about our relationship and the relationship that we have with men, one of whom is played by Claude Brasseur.

Was it good being back and working in Montréal?

Well, I have spent a lot of time there this year. I was on the jury at the Montréal festival, I recorded my album for RCA in New York and went home a lot, and Lewis and I did our show there as well. I have a house there, with this *pied à terre* here in Paris, so that I've really only been in Paris about two months in the last year. Even when I'm doing a French film it is rare that all of it will be shot in Paris. *Preparez vos mouchoirs* was shot everywhere, in Belgium, and all around. Now it is sure I will be staying awhile because Lewis and I are doing a show again at Bobino. God, where do I live? Well, I'm still a Canadian citizen and spend most of my time there.

So, then, what's a little girl from Shawinigan doing in Paris in the first place?

It *is* odd, huh? I grew up there and only left when I was 18. I had no real idea of being an actress, or any idea at all of what I wanted to do. I met Gilles Carle in Montréal. I fell in love with cinema through him. He became the complete master of my life, of my orientation in life. He taught me everything. It's a luxury to have an *auteur* writing and building his films around you. I did five films with him, all written for me. He loved actors and so used to take me everywhere, into the editing room and all, to teach me about every aspect of film-making. It really all began with him. The first film I did with Carle was *La Mort d'un bucheron* in 1973. That went to Cannes, which was great luck. In that period there were very few Canadian films being made. To become a film actress, let alone a movie star, was almost impossible there then. Now I buy *Film Français* and it is amazing to see all the things being made. When I was doing *Bucheron,* I recall that Geneviève Bujold was making what I call her last Québécois film, *Kamouraska,* and she was getting ready to leave Canada. I remember saying "Oh, not me! I'll never leave!" I was just discovering my nationalism and was feeling very Québécoise. Then I found myself in a situation which is horrible for a young actress. I was making one film a year, which is not enough. The rest of the time I was spending five or six hours a day in a dance class, but I didn't know what to do because there wasn't anything. There were directors working, of course, but they—like [Claude] Jutra or [Denis] Arcand—all had a little band of their own around them, making sort of "family" films. I was hungry to work. The first four years or so with Gilles I consciously decided to stay in Québec even though I was getting offers from elsewhere, partly because Carle's films were known in France. The French went crazy over *Mort d'un bucheron,* so that I was getting calls

to come to France and do this or that. I refused then because I loved Carle's cinema. Still I knew it was impossible to go on making one film a year. The logical move for me was Hollywood or Paris—a film capital. I mean I wasn't going to India or Japan, right? I got a call from Alain Corneau to do *La Menace* with Yves Montand, and I thought I might as well do it.

You see the last film I did with Gilles was *L'Ange et la femme*, just before the wave of tax breaks and co-productions. No one wanted to produce the film even if Carle's films had very low budgets. Gilles never got paid for his scenario, nor for his direction. The part of the budget which was his salary went into the production itself. It was sad and ridiculous. We were all working for nothing. That is a fabulous school, of course, but there comes a time to graduate. A man making his ninth feature film would like to have a bigger budget so that he can have more freedom and get out from the pressure a bit. For example, you remember the striptease in *La Tête de Normande Saint Onge* where I dance with the Pope between my legs? That was inspired by Lili St Cyr, by the way, who everyone said was crazy at the time. Anyway, we were supposed to have a house full of people watching me dance, but we couldn't afford it. So there I am dancing without an audience, which changes the whole meaning and concept. It makes Gilles a voyeur and me a narcissist. It is silly and limited. Out of desperation and a hunger to shoot we made *L'Ange* for $50,000—just between the time of the *cinéma d'auteur* and the big co-productions. It was very courageous for Carle to make it as he did—in our house with nothing, in seven days and in black and white. Everyone was so proud when his film, a Canadian film, was in competition at Cannes—but afterwards no one was around to help him. Of course I was angry.

Before we did *L'Ange*, we started to be friendly with Lewis Furey. Carle wrote a fabulous musical comedy, with Lewis doing the music. The three of us worked for three years on it. It was called *Exit*, but as the concept has developed, it is now called *Phantastica*. It needed about a million and a half to be produced, which is not so much for a musical. We started to talk to producers. We spoke a lot to Harry Gulkin [Canadian producer of *Lies My Father Told Me* and other films] who said "Oh, yeah, but Carole Laure can't sing. Lewis Furey is unknown. Why don't we do it with real stars?" As soon as we started talking about more money, they started talking about Streisand! I came to France to promote Gilles' films and everyone here kept saying "My God, you are *so* talented! Come here and work." I wanted to stay in my own country and help develop an industry there, but the attitude in Canada wouldn't allow that. It

"Handkerchief" is up for an Oscar. Now everyone is calling me.

isn't just one man, no matter how horrible, it is a whole colonized spirit. We were all right for little movies—which after all made the reputation of Canadian cinema—but if we got more ambitious they called for Americans. Canada is a suburb of America!

I just got fed up with fighting for this and fighting for that. I know I'm talented. People outside Canada tell me I'm talented. Ok, it has to be "big foreign, well-known stars?" Fine, then it is exactly that you'll have, even with my Canadian passport. I left. When I told the Canadian press that I was going to co-star with Yves Montand, suddenly you could see "star" in their eyes. Ah! She's becoming something else! And *La Menace* is certainly not my best film. It isn't bad, but it is what it is, a commercial, mainstream movie. *La Tête* was my best film up to then, but it took Corneau and Montand to change their point of view.

Since then I have done one film after another in France, and Lewis and I had great success with our show at the Palace. For Harry Gulkin's information: La Palace has 1,000 seats, and without publicity and without money, we filled it every night and still turned away about 300 for each performance. We got rave reviews calling it the most original musical in Paris. Many of the songs came straight out of Carle's musical which we were told needed "known stars."

Well, now you are known in North America outside of Québec because of Blier's Préparez vos mouchoirs [Get Out Your Handkerchiefs]. *It has only been a few weeks but has it made a difference?*

Yes. I knew that one of the films I made here would have to finally get released there and make it. There are so few foreign films released in America, but *Mouchoirs* is a fabulous success. It has opened bigger than *Cousin, Cousine* and is up for an Oscar. Now everyone is calling. I have fifteen French scripts, five from America, and the Canadians are now crawling back. I am the same as when I left Canada, but they had to be told by other countries that I am box office. I'm not the only one, you know. It is all silly. A passport is not a sign of talent. Maybe the situation will improve now. The answer certainly is not to imitate the Americans or to sign Minelli or Brando or Streisand. The answer is to develop and care for our own talent. To give bigger budgets to the men who started Canadian cinema and who kept it alive no matter what—to Carle, to Jutra, to [André] Forcier, and a few others. To have an industry which is Canadian means you have to promote your own talent. There is no reason we can't continue to co-produce with the Americans, with the French, with whoever. I can act with an actor no matter where he comes from, but let's not be colonized all the way around!

The talent that is there is what makes us original and interesting. That's what makes our films something more than American sub-productions which now seem to be the style. Producers! That's what we have needed. Real producers, I mean. Now they are coming around—after my albums and Lewis' albums are selling well and the show has been a success—and they are saying "We have a great idea. Have you ever thought of making a film musical?" The very thing we wanted to do two years ago! Well now it will happen. I will do Gilles Carle's musical and he will direct it. He wrote it for me; Lewis did the music; Carle will direct. Period. It is time we found a new way to do musicals, and this is it. RCA, who did our albums, is behind us, and I am in constant contact with Gilles. Everything looks fine. The script is ready, and I will go back to Canada to make it.

One thing I've learned about movies since I have been away is that Canadians have to make films which will play everywhere. That is a question of producers. We now have producers who are learning their business. After the film is shot is really when their real work starts, in fighting for a film's release everywhere. Do you think it was luck that *Preparez vos mouchoirs* got to America? The Americans didn't want it. The answer to everything is always "no". The producers just kept fighting—for months and months. Do you know how Gilles Carle's films got shown in France? A bad distributor in Canada sold the French rights to a bad distributor here, and Gilles' film opened in a sex cinema in Pigalle as pornography. Just by chance the owner of the cinema Le St. André des Arts went with some friends to see a dirty movie one night, saw it, and said to himself that the film was in the wrong place. He bought the rights, opened it, and suddenly Carle was an international *auteur*! No Canadian producer fought for Carle's cinema.

It isn't even a case of foreign distribution. How many Québécois films are never even seen in Anglophone Canada! Then they ask why films don't do well. Things are changing, of course, and co-productions may help. After all, if there is French money in a film, it is likely

to be distributed in France, for example. Personally, for me, things are also obviously better—with the Blier film up for the Oscar, and the Dugowson film probably going to Cannes. I keep getting calls from Canada, although a lot of them are still talking about Marlon Brando!

Carle once said that at forty you would be a director.

Maybe. At forty. I'm told by Lewis and Gilles and my other directors that I'm a good collaborator. Gilles taught me everything about making films, but currently I'm happy on one side of the camera, so I never think about directing. Right now I want to be a star. Everyone in the business wants that even if they won't admit it. Not in the old star system sense, but I want to know that millions of people are seeing what I do. I am also beginning to be in a better position to choose my material. Of course being an actress means being very dependent—on the material offered and on the director. Still I am a good provocateur and so good material comes my way.

And have you been happy with the material and films you have so far done since coming to France?

Well, I commented on the Corneau, and I obviously like the Blier. Its success doesn't surprise me. The Americans take and like what they can't or don't do. I can't think that an American director would have put a woman and a child together in quite that funny and touching way, or if they had it would have been vulgar. It has a sense of humour different from that of the Americans. It is very French and very personal. When I read the script I must say I saw a young man in the role, but it was a child of ten or twelve. So I played the role like Snow White, which was the only way to make it work. It was poetic and intelligently done by Blier. It was a challenge. You know, when I first was on the plane coming to work for the first time in France I had just seen Blier's *Les Valseuses* in Québec. I was sitting there dreaming of working with him and with Depardieu, who is one of the most exciting actors in the world. I had already met them when I came over with Gilles, because they were fond of and followed Carle's cinema, and we got on well because we came from the same school of filmmaking and acting.

La Jument Vapeur I did with Joyce Bunuel, who is very intelligent and very attractive. She had just written her first film and I was seduced by her and by the script, which was very funny. I had never worked with a woman, and thought it was about time I tried. She didn't have much experience and was learning as she went along, so a lot of the film doesn't work as well as the script indicated it should. I also chose the film because it was a small budget film and I thought it would be good for me after having done two expensive movies. I also wanted to

Right now I want to be a star. Everyone in the business wants that.

work at something which had never been offered me before, an ordinary housewife. I was known here as "the beautiful Carole Laure" and thought it would be good to play something else that didn't have anything to do with my body or with glamour. I would work with her again sometime. I think she will yet do a fine movie.

Is that a problem? Being beautiful and having appeared fairly often in the nude on screen?

Of course. I was offered all that stuff: *Emmanuelle, The Story of O,* all of it. I just laughed because I am not interested in that. I'm interested in a part, not just being beautiful, or sexy, or nude on the screen. That is fine, of course, to show and to talk about sexuality, but it isn't everything. They all tried to get me interested in scripts which merely repeated what Gilles had already done: "now she walks around in the nude like a cat," "now she is on her knees in the nude." Silly. They forgot that in Carle's films while I might be nude for three minutes I was also on screen for two hours with a whole character and a whole story. If you make a whole film depend upon those three minutes you end up with exploitative garbage. Now I'm not really sure about nude scenes. I mean I don't plan to cover up my body from toes to neck in films, but it seems that people only remember the nude scenes and can't recall the rest of each film!

Are there people you haven't yet worked with who appeal to you?

Lots. I would most of all like to work with Alain Resnais. With Truffaut for other reasons, because he has his own world which I like. Robert Altman. Yet Resnais is the one I would like to work with most.

Those are all non-Canadian. How about back home? Lefebvre?

No. I am not interested in his work. I admire him because he was one of the first, and because he is a fighter and kept making his own films no matter what happened. He kept the faith. It is just that his work doesn't touch me much. I would love to do an entire film with André Forcier. I did a small bit in his *L'Eau chaude, l'eau frette,* and I loved it. He is a genius, and the young hope of the Québec cinema. Yes, he is the best young director we have. I would work with him anytime.

I suppose you must be sick of talking about it, but would you like to discuss Sweet Movie *for a moment?*

Ah, yes. Well that was something else. That was a very bad experience. It was horrible. Makavejev offered me a terrific script, but that script never got made. It was the first time I had worked outside my Québec "family" and he tried to take advantage of it. The minimum an actress should know is the intention of the director. That's the minimum. Now, because of that experience, I end up a bit tough in finding out the smallest detail of what a director has in his mind. He tried to put me into situations and to make me do things no actress could work in or do. I kept refusing by saying "that isn't in the script." "No, I won't eat my own shit!" I kept refusing and my part kept getting smaller and smaller, until now I'm hardly in the movie, which is a good thing. You should see the outtakes! The things he got people manipulated into doing. Sick people they were, and none of them professional actors, of course! He was sick himself. He had real personal problems which were certainly stronger than I was. He has asked me to work with him again, but there is no way! I see him sometimes by accident and he is still in some kind of trouble. Then the situation after the film was finished was maybe just as bad. Suddenly I was sued for $218,000 for forcing Dusan to make pornography! The producers thought it would make great publicity. The same day I got a notice they were taking me to court, I got a call from one of the producers who said "Come on, darling. Come to Cannes. It will be great publicity, you'll be a star, and it will be great fun." Well, it might have been fun for them, but I had to give a lawyer a lot of money to fight that case, so it wasn't fun for me. And then I opened the newspapers and found they had put out a press release saying that I was suing them! That's the version which mostly got printed—never the truth. It worked for them for a while. Everyone was fighting to see the film at Cannes. Then, of course, when they saw it, they wrote about it as it was. The movie, thankfully, just died. Still, the newspapers to this day bring that up and it is always the producers' version you see. Still, I've been very lucky with the press, especially back in Québec, where I have great friends and fans among the press. People like Luc Perrault and Claude Daignault, and some others. It does strike me odd, however, that Anglophone Canadian newspapers, magazines, and critics never called to talk to me until after *Preparez vos mouchoirs* was a success in the United States. Does it strike you that way too?

David Overbey *is one of the programmers for the Toronto Film Festival, and* Take One*'s Paris correspondent.*

THROW ME SOMETHING MISTER!

WALK ON THE WATER, WALK ON THE RIVER

Popeye's Bar is Wild Oleanders territory, uptown New Orleans. This is the night before Fat Tuesday, the final chance to get it together before the last day of Mardi Gras, and even on the street in front of Popeye's you can feel the energy building. The Oleanders are Black Indians, one of 30 or so tribes of working-class blacks who celebrate Mardi Gras (and a few other special occasions) by dressing themselves in elaborate dream-Indian costumes of plumes and sparkle—and whose street chants and dancing may go back hundreds of years to the earliest slave gatherings in New Orleans' Congo Square. Dressing in costume is not just a silly Carnival game for the Black Indians; it's a religious act, a mystical tie with their past. It's the central fact of their lives. When they perform for white folks, the Oleanders are sophisticated, even slick—but tonight is Mardi Gras rehearsal, for members only.

Cars are pulling in and out like pistons in front of Popeye's—pimpmobiles and funkytown jalopies, letting out dancing crowds of black people dressed variously in fancy rags and down-home threads, all of whom swirl around on the sidewalk, talking and jiving and second-lining to the drumming from inside. (The second-line is a New Orleans dance in which you plant your feet and move what your mama gave you. When you can second-line standing still, you're ready to try it in motion—following a marching band, or a parade of Wild Oleanders.)

The door to the bar is open, but inside people are packed so tightly that you have to dance your way in. Getting from the door to the bar is like making love to 15 strangers of both sexes, and getting a drink at the bar is the supreme test of cool under pressure. It's about 110 degrees, and you can hear the drumming with your stomach. There are three giant congas, assorted smaller drums, bongos and tambourines scattered throughout the room, and everyone is dancing and yelling and getting crazy. There are at least 300 people inside a room big enough for 100, they're all drunk, and only four of them are white—but it doesn't feel threatening. Not in terms of color, anyway.

You can catch a few bits of rhyming Mardi Gras chant through the roar ("Flag Boy coming/Spy Boy humming...") and what might be fragments of a leftover field holler ("Walk on the water/Walk on the river...") but the one chant that's easy to make out is a repeated, four-syllable "Firewater!" that circles the room along with a tambourine full of money, and if you don't want trouble you better kick in at least 50¢ to buy whiskey for the drummers.

The heat, the pressure, the drummed polyrhythms are completely overpowering; it's not something you listen to, it's something you breathe instead of oxygen. Here and there people have got the Ghost, screaming out of their heads and jumping ecstatic, and it hits me that this is African ceremonial magic—voodoo, or something very close to it.

Suddenly I'm terrified. I've loved black music all my life—chased after it, studied it, learned from it. But I've never hit it so pure or powerful before. This is no pale shadow of a ghostly blues song—it's alive. My heart starts pounding, there's pressure behind my eyes, my hands are

Mardi Gras from Underneath or 24 Hours of Sex, Violence and Chicken in New Orleans

By Michael Goodwin

numb, I'm dizzy. If I don't get outside I'm going to fall down.

On the street it's an hour short of midnight, and the scene is still jumping. I cool off for five minutes, start back inside, stop. It's *serious* in there. From all reports, Congo Square was serious too. I want it so bad I can taste it. It scares me so bad I'm shaking. I've got to give up to it, I've got to give it up—and I *can't*.

Tomorrow I'll be ready. Hey La Bas! Eh Legba!

PUBLIC SEX,
RITUAL SACRIFICE

It's four in the morning. Out on the river, the King of the Zulus is drinking whiskey, waiting for the sun to rise.

Mike Smith's house is freezing. But it's warm in the bathroom, and Leslie is already at the mirror—16 and delicious in red transparent nightgown, bare feet, jet-black lipstick, green sequins on her eyelids. I slide next to her in front of the mirror so I can paint my face: half black, half white. The split-personality paint job feels just right; I'm still scared, but I'm excited, too. Mysteries will be revealed today. Perhaps I can pass through my fear, my self. I pull a pink fright wig over my hair and Leslie looks me over, breasts moving behind nylon. "You need some lipstick," she says. "Here, I'll do it for you."

The touch of her lipstick is far more intimate than I expect. If her father, my host, photographer Michael Smith, weren't in the next room I'd take Leslie in my arms and kiss her; this would be the day for it.

Sleeping bags strewn across Smith's living room floor begin to kick fitfully as their occupants squirm into underwear. One of the kickers and squirmers is a slender young man in a rare Funky Kingston/Toots and the Maytals t-shirt—old pal, ace reporter, big-time New York music critic John Morthland. Moth and I

On top of the marquee, three girls with no pants

are out of Austin on the back roads, Nashville-bound via Jackson, the Mississippi Delta and Memphis (where we *will* try and stop by Minglewood). Here, in a Carnival night full of promises, halfway between my SF and his NYC, Morthland stumbles out of his borrowed bag into New Orleans.

He's half asleep, and he's not alone. None of Smith's floor-crashers are looking very lively. In fact, no one in New Orleans who's at all serious about Mardi Gras has gotten any sleep for 24 hours—but at three in the morning everyone goes to bed and pretends to sleep for an hour. Everyone but Smith, who hasn't even slowed down—he's been up all night smoking dope, drinking coffee, trying on his magnificent Photo Mask, a square, African-looking creation of lens filters, strips of film, enlarging paper boxes and various photographic paraphernalia.

A biting wind blows off the river at the foot of Canal Street, chilling the chicken handlers loading wings and drumsticks into knapsacks held by shivering chicken grips. Frigid chicken captains are shouting orders into walkie-talkies and foot-frozen chicken runners are carrying big boxes of hot, steaming chicken to the edge of the river. Cameramen cluster around the chicken, warming their hands. The sky is getting light.

In the coldest room of Smith's house a big, bearded, bear-like man of some 40 years is trying to glue a long, rubber nose onto his face with eyelash cement. He wears a fur mask, giving him a cruel, animalistic look. The rubber nose falls off again, and he abandons it. He is surrounded by battery belts, piles of unexposed film, and an Eclair 16mm movie camera. He is filmmaker/folklorist Les Blank, whose prize-winning musical documentaries include *The Blues According to Lightnin' Hopkins*, *Chulas Fronteras*, *Always for Pleasure*.

Blank is an artist as well as an important folklorist, and he makes joyous, angry, complicated films that reflect his own priorities. He loves personal, idiosyncratic art—be it cajun fiddling or creole cooking. And he hates the mass-market, six-lane technology that seems to be overwhelming the older regional styles.

Recently there's been some recognition. Blank tours colleges and film archives, famous critics like Jay Cocks hail him in print, the Museum of Modern Art schedules retrospectives, film festivals invite him to appear. But he still has trouble raising money, and his eyes still brim with pain. "My bucket's got a hole in it," he notes one night over the last bottle of wine. He can be difficult—conflicted, withdrawn, bitter. One gets the sense that it's barely possible for him to work at all. And yet he *does* work—and his films are love songs to beat back the silence of death.

This morning he's terrified.

"Come on," says Maureen Gosling, the cheerful, blonde, blue-eyed woman who has collaborated with Blank on his last four films as sound recorder, assistant editor, camera assistant and general right-hand woman. "We're late already."

"I don't want to do it," says Blank miserably. "I've lost my enthusiasm. I only agreed for the free trip to New Orleans."

He means free trip to Mardi Gras. No one who has lived through Mardi Gras will miss another without, at least, a moment's pause to think, "How can I get down in New Orleans?" Life in Crescent City is measured between Mardi Gras and Mardi Gras. People talk about the last one, plan for the one coming up. It's the source of New Orleans' magic—an ancient heart that beats once a year, on Fat Tuesday. Today.

Fat Tuesday, the big blow-off last day of Carnival, caps two weeks of building excitement and revelry. It's good business; tourists buy it every year—local color, charm, harmless fun. In fact, that's only a piece of it. Mardi Gras is a living ritual, a working time machine at the heart of New Orleans, carrying prehistoric emotions and long-forgotten epiphanies into contact with modern life. Some scholars claim to have traced it back thousands of years to Dionysian celebrations in which public sex and ritual sacrifice played important parts. True or not, Mardi Gras is a lot wilder than advertised—two weeks in which the rules are suspended and the city goes mad. Ecstacy, terror, drunkenness, sexual abandon—souls are healed, death is defied.

Mardi Gras is not a spectator sport; either you *do* Mardi Gras or you lose out. Mike Smith is going to chase Black Indians with his camera. Leslie is heading for the French Quarter where, come nightfall, there will be fist-fucking in the streets, and nothing is forbidden, even to 16-year-olds. But Blank, Gosling, Morthland and I have a commercial to shoot—a Mardi Gras commercial.

Dixi-Fried Chicken, a popular New Orleans fast-food franchise known for its spicy chicken (rumor has it they soak it overnight in Louisiana Hot Sauce before frying), is going national. They need TV spots to project a New Orleans image, and that means Mardi Gras. So they've bought the King of the Zulus.

Zulus and Mardi Gras go back a long way together, the Zulus being one of the oldest, biggest, most prestigious and most middle-class of the Mardi Gras societies—and the *only* big one that's black. Traditionally, Fat Tuesday doesn't start in New Orleans until the Zulu boat lands at dawn, and the King and Queen, resplendently attired, step onto the foot of Canal Street to lead the Zulu Parade to what used to be Congo Square.

This year, Dixi-Fried wants the King to land with a box of chicken under his arm and a big chicken-eating grin on his face. This will be the opening shot for a series of TV spots (produced and directed by local filmmaker Jim Blackburn) featuring happy Mardi Gras celebrants munching Dixi-Fried chicken in giant, half-second close-ups. So last week Blackburn went to see the King. Privately.

"What's in it for the Zulus?" asked the King.

"Well, we don't have a big budget," said Blackburn.

"I'm not hungry," said the King. "But for $500 I could work up an appetite."

"How about $300?" asked Blackburn.

"For $300 I'll eat some chicken," said the King.

So, theoretically, when the King steps off the boat at dawn today he's taking Dixi-Fried with him. Four camera crews will be waiting to capture this historic moment, following which crews and chicken teams will disperse into the Mardi Gras revelers to shoot "product shots."

All but our crew, the Les Blank crew, presently parked a few blocks from the dock and unloading equipment with cold-numbed fingers. Blank hasn't shot a commercial in years, but his eye for human detail is well known to Blackburn, along with his ability to work under impossible conditions and bring back gorgeous footage. So Blackburn has flown Blank and Gosling in from Berkeley to capture "the soul of Mardi Gras," and Morthland and I have talked Blank into letting us tag along as semi-skilled camera assistants.

The sun is coming up behind the clouds. Three Blackburn camera crews are shivering under the hard, grey sky. The Zulus are coming in. And a long, long freight train is creeping down a track directly between us and the dock. With the clock running and no end to the train in sight, we grab the equipment and swarm over the slow-rolling freight, onto the dock and right to the edge of the Mississippi River. The Zulu boat has landed. Fat Tuesday is under way.

It's my first Mardi Gras.

BLACKBURN'S BEST MOMENT

Two days ago at Blackburn's studio:

"How about Blank?" asked an ad-man.

Mardi Gras is a lot wilder than advertised—two weeks in which the rules are suspended and the city goes mad.

"He's not gonna shoot documentary crap, is he? Or too much gay beauty pageant?"

"Blank is terrific," said Blackburn. "Haven't you seen his New Orleans movie, *Always For Pleasure*? It's just the kind of stuff we need."

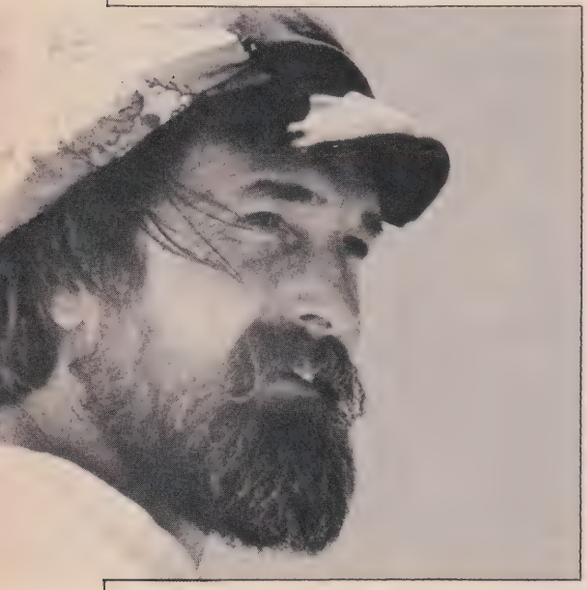
"We need a family commercial," insisted the ad-man.

"Don't worry," said Blackburn, "I'll make sure Blank knows what we're looking for. He can get stuff no one else can get."

"Are you sure the King will come through?" asked a Dixi-Fried man.

"Well, he'd better, 'cause I've already paid him," said Blackburn. "But I'm gonna be on the boat with him in case he forgets."

"For Chrissake be delicate about it," said the Dixi-Fried man. "He may have our money, but he's still a drunken black man." There was a moment of silence; people looked at the floor.



Les Blank

"So am I," said Blackburn, who isn't. It was his best moment.

DOUBLE-CROSS

Here come the Zulus in leopard skins, black Afro wigs, grass skirts. Black to begin with, they have painted themselves blacker, and outlined eyes and lips in white like darkies in a minstrel show. They step onto the gangplank, across six feet of choppy, grey water to the dock—clichés coming home to roost. But whose clichés? Zulu Number One is not carrying a Dixi-Fried box. Neither is Zulu Number Two. Meanwhile, a bunch of Zulus are jiving around on the deck of the boat, passing bottles from hand to hand. A cold wind is blowing off the river.

Now a slightly better class of Zulus appears at the head of the gangplank—adding shiny gold vests and white gloves to the skins and skirts. But still there is no chicken in sight, and the camera crews are getting nervous. At last, the King of the Zulus steps from a doorway on deck—

Ecstacy, terror, drunkenness, sexual abandon

crowned, sceptered, dignified and completely without chicken.

It's a double-cross.

As if by white man's magic, Blackburn materializes at the head of the gangplank with a box of Dixi-Fried and shoves it into the hands of the Zulu King. The King pushes it away, looks straight ahead, and steps onto the gangplank. Blackburn elbows his way into the crowd on the gangplank and sticks the box to the King a second time, yelling something in his ear. The King gives him a dirty look, but he takes the box—his expression that of a man holding a giant dog turd. Blackburn steps back, the cameras roll, and for exactly one half second everything holds.

Suddenly the Zulu right behind the King spots the box of chicken, grabs it angrily and throws it off the gangplank into the Mississippi. The king steps onto the ground, followed (and quickly surrounded) by a crowd of furious Zulus. The Zulu Queen looks on, serene and unruffled in shimmering full-length evening gown. It looks like the King is about to earn his $300 getting his ass kicked.

Les Blank, whose passion for good food may even surpass his passion for traditional music, turns off his camera. "Good for him," he whispers. "I'm *glad* he threw it in the river."

But ten minutes later the entire Blank camera crew is eating Dixi-Fried—even Les. It's cruelly cold on the waterfront, and the chicken warms the hands as well as providing a good, greasy feeling in the stomach. "I'm extremely fond of chicken," notes Les, polishing off a wing. "Anyway, I respect their gimmick of adding spices and hot pepper. Pass another drumstick."

FORCES OF FAST-FOOD

Canal Street is the main drag of downtown New Orleans; it borders the French Quarter, and it runs from the Mississippi most of the way to Lake Pontchartrain. By noon it will be packed solid with a wild, drunken party. Most of the parades end up on the Canal; also most of the French Quarter celebrants, checking to see what kind of action might be shaping up.

At 9:30 in the chill morning, the only action is a small protest demonstration, dressed down in radical jeans and army fatigues, walking a grim circle on the green center strip, carrying signs about police brutality.

"Hey hey hey, two heads popped today," chant the demonstrators (a clever variation on the traditional Black Indian chant, "Hey hey hey, two-way pocky-way,") and "Mardi Gras ain't no fun, brutal cops hit everyone." Hell of a note on Mardi Gras morning.

By 11 the crowds are building fast. We float through the Quarter on a wind of costume and music. Freedom fills the streets, a perfect inertia-less opportunity. Anything is possible today; there are no limits. Even Les, who's often withdrawn and sad, seems at peace with himself. I can't remember what I was afraid of.

Perhaps it has to do with masks, behind which lust can be acknowledged and passion acted out in anonymity, but I'm beginning to feel strangely liberated. No one can see *me*, only the mask I've chosen—so I can be myself without fear: part of a camera crew in the midst of Mardi Gras, filming our own free flight through a ritual celebration designed to push us past observation into full participation. What a party!

Around the corner of St. Louis Cathedral, Blackburn and a chicken crew materialize suddenly in the wake of a family of devils. "I want you to cover the parade on Canal in 15 minutes," he tells Les.

"I thought I was just supposed to wander around shooting local color," says Les.

"Well, we're short-handed," says Blackburn, disappearing into the crowd—but not before I grab some hot chicken from the chicken grip.

"Shit," says Les. "I bet he'll do that to us all day. You want to be a Spy Boy, Goodwin?"

"Black Indians?"

"Yeah," says Les. "The Spy Boy keeps an eye out for enemy tribes, and when he spots one he warns the Big Chief and the tribe runs away."

"Run away! Run away!" I whisper loudly, as Blackburn reappears at the edge of the crowd.

"Huh?" says Les.

"After you shoot the parade," adds Blackburn, "you better come up to the hotel room at the Royal Sonesta. We may need you for shots this afternoon."

"Shit!" says Les, giving me a bitter look as he bites into a drumstrick. He's starting to feel guilty about his alignment with the Forces of Fast-Food.

ANCIENT MAGIC

People throw you things. People on floats throw you necklaces and Mardi Gras doubloons. People on balconies toss you beads, medallions, streamers and masks. Mardi Gras status depends on how much stuff you catch. A woman with 15 strings of cheap beads around her neck is a plutocrat; a man with only three is a pauper.

Souls are healed, death is defied

The hard part is getting people to throw the stuff to *you*, because there are more people in the streets than things to throw. There's a mantra, a spell, a traditional New Orleans incantation that goes back into the mists of legend. (It also appears on New Orleans litter cans.) "Throw me something mister." And it works.

At first I stood mute, gazing hopefully at passing parades with hands outstretched—and received nothing. Finally, for the hell of it, I began to chant the mantra. "Throw me something mister!" I yelled, feeling like a fool. No one could have heard me; the noise was deafening, and everyone else was yelling "Throw me something mister!" too. Then I grabbed a necklace out of the air. Soon I had beads, doubloons, medallions. I didn't feel silly, I felt ancient magic running through me.

When the floats were consecrated to Dionysius, what did the priests throw to the crowds? Were the doubloons real? What did they buy?

EVERYONE GETS A PASS

Three white women in their early '20s, drunk, fall down in a giggling heap at the corner of Bourbon and Canal. One of them, a fragile-looking blonde in shiny silver blouse and pants, looks up to find herself surrounded by a crowd of black people. "Niggers!" she screams. "Dirty niggers! Get these niggers away from me!"

The crowd, perfectly unable to comprehend what's going on, backs off a little as the blonde climbs to her feet. She looks around, spots two ten-year-old black kids, and lurches after them, screaming, "I'll get you! I'll get you little nigger bastards!" The kids run for their lives; the crowd waits patiently to see what will happen next. Everyone gets a pass on Fat Tuesday—but the pass is only good up to a point. The blonde is using up her pass fast.

She stumbles back to her friends, now joined by a drunk, bearded hippie. All four hug and kiss tearfully, fall down, and get up giggling. The blonde looks around again, freaks out. "I hate these *niggers*!" she screams. This time the crowd begins to rumble, and a few people punch the air, muttering threats. The blonde runs crying down Bourbon Street with her friends in pursuit. Half a block away she stops, whirls in a tight circle, plants her feet and screams, "Dirty niggers! I hate all you dirty niggers!"

A crowd of young blacks gathers fast. "White honky cunt!" someone yells.

She spreads her arms and legs. "Go ahead and jump me!" she screams. "Fuck me, niggers!" Suddenly she leaps at a black man with a kid, swinging at him, missing. He swings back, lands a solid punch on her face, and the blonde goes down hard. She staggers back up. The black edge closer, shouting angrily, forcing her up against a plate glass window.

"I hate *niggers*!" she screams in terror. Then she whirls and flings herself face-first against the window, hard, again and again. The crowd watches, fascinated, perfectly willing to let her smash her face through the glass.

Finally, two policemen wade through the crowd, grab the blonde, and carry her around the corner to a police car where her friends catch up with her. "I'm all right," she insists, crying. "I just want my mama and my sister."

FAIRY COMING THROUGH

A man in a Nixon mask, holding a newspaper over his head with a headline reading, "NIXON RESIGNING." A man dressed as a giant bottle of Tabasco Sauce. A woman dressed as a box of Zatarain's Crab and Shrimp Boil. An impromptu dance between the Tabasco and the Boil. A family dressed as different colored crayons, and mama as the box. Seven people as the Seven Deadly Sins, shouting "Sin!" as they dance down the street. A young woman as a cat-girl, numerous nipples down her front. A bearded man in tutu and gauzy fairy-wings, gliding past on roller skates shouting, "Fairy coming through!" A bare-assed priest-in-cassock. Erzuli, a woman with a red dress on. Six men as a long, pink penis. Many frogs.

CHICKEN FLIES PAST HIM

The third-floor room at the Royal Sonesta on Bourbon Street is full of film crews, ad-men, beer and cold, soggy fried chicken. Outside, Mardi Gras is roaring.

Les opens the window, and instantaneously a crowd gathers on the street below, hands stretched upward, yelling, "Throw me something mister!"

"I've got to run out and end this roll of film," says Les. "Maybe we should toss 'em some beads and I'll shoot it from the window."

"Toss 'em chicken," someone suggests.

"No!" says the Dixi-Fried ad-man.

"Why not? It's cold, we're not gonna eat it."

A cameraman grabs a drumstick and flings it through the window. By this time; everyone on the street has a catch-ching reflex like a star outfielder, and the chicken leg is snapped on the fly. Cheers rise upwards. Les grabs his camera and starts filming as more chicken flies past him, out the window. Not a single piece hits the ground.

Two black kids start throwing the chicken back. A wing bounces off the window sill. A leg lands on the dresser. Les runs out of film as the last of the chicken goes out the window, and comes flying right back in.

THREE GIRLS WITH NO PANTS

"Where is that music coming from?" says Les. It's "Mardi Gras Mambo" by the Hawketts, a Carnival standard since 1954, but it sounds tinny, distorted, oddly sinister. A quick scan of Burgundy Street reveals nothing except solid-pack people.

"Maybe someone on a balcony has their stereo turned up," says Maureen, but there's something else, something *scary* about the sound itself. Most peculiar.

We're under orders from Blackburn to make our way to the gay beauty pageant on Royal Street, but Les keeps stopping for beer, I keep stopping to get warm, and all around us we keep seeing great costumes, amazing scenes and beautiful women that we *have* to get on film. "Oh, man, over there, that black woman next to the spaceman, ooh!" "No, better, on top of the movie theater marquee, three girls with no pants on, get 'em quick, they're *dancing*!"

Non-stop action is on every side, Overload City, and best of all *we're* as much a part of the action as anyone. Objective and subjective become different readings of the same, silly punch line. Inside and outside approach unity. Mardi Gras opens to us her timeless revelation.

Les moves through the madness in the street with his heavy Eclair in one hand, a beer in the other, and an inner calm he displays at no other time—calling his shots and shooting them with off-hand expertise. Morthland is in charge of obtaining signed model releases from people so they can be used in the commercial, and he gets signatures from *everyone*—even drunks and crazies. I'm on light meter, and by this point I can taste a half-stop variation in the light. Maureen has been sick all day, but she loads film magazines flawlessly and fast—and not one jams or sticks. We're a team—smooth, slick, telepathic—and we're getting incredible footage. It's Heaven.

"Mardi Gras Mambo," with its ominious overtone, begins to get louder. The crowd parts, and a police car comes edging through the crush—every light flashing, every red whirler and orange blinker and yellow traffic arrow and white strobe light dazzler going off. From the loudspeaker on top of the police car, "Mardi Gras Mambo" is squawking into the air in exactly the same nasty, metallic tone that usually says, "Pull over, buddy!" or, "This is the police, you're doing 75 in a 45 mph zone."

A family dressed as crayons, and mama as the box

Two policemen are riding on the hood of the car, drinking beer and grinning like fools—and as the car glides through the crowd people are hanging strings of beads on the cops' holstered guns. Driving the car, another smiling cop holds the microphone for the overhead speaker next to a cassette tape recorder on which "Mardi Gras Mambo" is playing. Behind the car, a long line of Jimmy Carters, rabbits, fairies, Spocks, frogs, devils and face-painted teenagers are dancing to the music, second-lining the police car.

"Quick," says Les, "get me over there." He lifts the camera and starts filming as I grab his shoulders and walk him alongside the slow-rolling cop car. Presently it stops, and the driver holds the microphone out the window so a street fiddler can play over the sound system. Square dancers clear a space around the car and swing partners in a Texas Star.

People are laughing, drinking whiskey, smoking dope. From high balconies, masked women throw streamers and golden doubloons. The air is filled with falling beads. Mirrored costumes flash yellow and red, catching the car-top light show and tossing it back.

Les steps up to the window of the car. "Do you do this every year?" he asks.

"Nope," says the cop, 35 years old, with a moustache under his nose and a flower behind his ear. "This is the first time. I did something like this one Halloween, though. I made a tape of spooky music and played it through the speaker, and I got a good response."

"Does the Police Department approve?" asks Les.

"I hope they never hear about it," says the cop.

A beautiful, barefoot 16-year-old girl wearing nothing but red lace underwear dances up to the car, hangs a string of beads over the mirror, leans in the window and kisses the cop full on the lips. The kiss goes on for a long time, and the crowd roars. Finally the girl dances back into the crowd, the cop switches on a different sequence of flashing lights, and the car inches forward again, heading toward Canal—and the protest marchers.

The second-line is even longer now. On the loudspeaker, Marvin Gaye is singing, "Got to Give It Up."

QUICKIE

The light changes fast as the afternoon rolls on. I'm taking a meter reading somewhere on Dumaine Street when a young woman wearing a bright red poncho over a long peasant dress and leather-thong sandals comes stepping up to me. "What are you doing?" she asks.

I'm too busy being professional to pay her much attention. "Light meter reading, TV commercial..." she nods, walks on, stops a few steps away, turns back and kisses me on the mouth. She puts a lot into it for a quickie.

She steps back smiling. "Um, any chance we could try that again?" I ask. She shakes her head, still smiling, and disappears into the crowd.

"What's the reading?" asks Les, who's missed the scene completely.

"Just fine," I grin at him. I'm starting to catch on.

DIRTY BOOGIE

The gay beauty contest is long over, but Royal Street is still full of costumed winners and losers. The biggest crowd is clustered around a beautiful young man in mesh tights, high heels and blue ribbon, dancing the dirty boogie on the front porch of a low, one-storey house. Loud music blasts onto the street from its open doors and windows. Something must be going on inside because, one after another, drag queens mount the stairway, pat the young man on the ass (cheers from the crowd) and enter the house. No one comes out.

"What's going on in there?" pipes up a little old lady in the front of the crowd. The young man shoots her an arch look, and says nothing.

"I want to see!" she insists.

The young man's look grows scornful. "There isn't much to see," he says, bumping his hips at her. "Just some hair and a little piece of meat." The crowd laughs, but the little old lady has gone too far to back down.

"You let me in there!" she orders.

"It's just a dick," snaps the young man. "Surely you've seen a *few* before."

The little old lady misses his sarcasm. "You know," she says, almost to herself, "I haven't seen *that* many..."

It's the last reply the young man is expecting, and his scornful mask cracks wide. For 30 seconds he roars with laughter. Then, recovering himself, he dances down the steps. "OK," he says, taking the little old lady by the hand. "Come on." Elegantly he escorts her up the steps and into the house. The door slams closed behind them, the windows slide shut, the music dies. Silence hangs over Royal Street.

Five or ten seconds pass, and then a lovely young woman of 25, wearing a short red dress and sensible shoes, runs up the stairs and bangs on the door. Nothing happens. She bangs again, harder. She turns to the crowd, her face desperate. "Mother!" she screams.

Ten minutes later the door opens, the windows slide up, and the little old lady emerges with a bemused look on her face. Presently she joins the young man in mesh tights in a boogie on the front porch. His boogie is dirtier than hers, but she does the best she can.

NAMELESS ZULU HERO

The woman behind the bar at Gladstone's doesn't even blink when we walk in face-painted, costumed and crazy. The sun is going down, but it's still Fat Tuesday and it will be until midnight.

Gladstone's is a black joint, uptown on Magazine Street, with a loud jukebox loaded with rhythm and blues, a jumping bar, and rooms that rent by the hour for nefarious purposes. On top of that, Gladstone's serves cheap, delicious New Orleans eats—red beans and rice, gumbo, corn bread, shrimp. Also fried chicken. We've been munching Dixi-Fried since dawn, but it's 8 pm and we're suddenly ravenous. Must be the cold.

Maureen, Morthland and I order gumbo and red beans. "I'll have the chicken," says Les. We stare at him, speechless. "I want to see how it stacks up against Dixi-Fried," he says.

When the chicken arrives it's delicious—fresh and fragrant in a crisp, flaky coating, just a hint of herbs in the batter. It tastes like it was cooked by a human being in the next room. It's 20 times better than Dixi-Fried. We raise our beer cans and drink a toast to the nameless Zulu hero who threw the Dixi-Fried in the river.

REJOIN AMERICA

It's nearly midnight and all film is gone, but we're too beat to sleep and too crazy to stop. We're down by the docks, driving along Tchoupitoulas Street, following the Mississippi back toward the Quarter when a big river rat runs in front of the car and disappears into a vacant lot.

'I just had a silly thought," says Les. "I wonder if the cats and the rats have Mardi Gras too, and stop chasing each other."

At midnight on the dot, cops will walk into the Quarter and arrest anyone still on the street. Law will prevail, order will reign. Giant water trucks will spray the streets. Teams of trashpeople will drive garbage-eating monster machines through the Quarter, sucking up beer cans, condoms and whiskey bottles. The army of everyday will take apart the ancient dream by morning. New Orleans will rejoin America.

But I might not. I might go looking for music at Popeye's. I might go looking for someone in a red dress. I might go looking for Leslie.

It's midnight.

Michael Goodwin *is a* Take One *Contributing Editor.*

PARIS ·JOURNAL·

BY DAVID OVERBEY

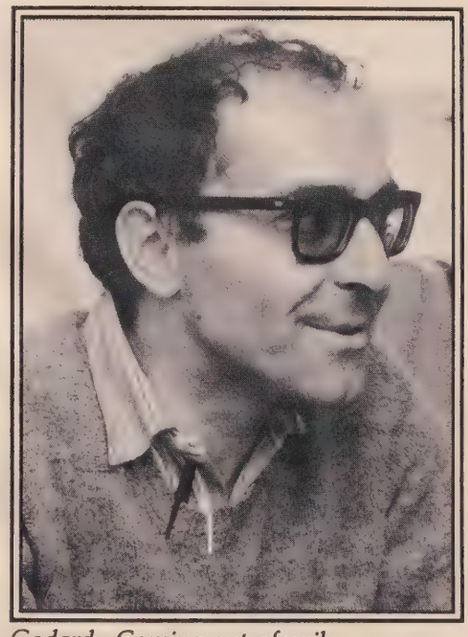
The current Paris season is not exactly scintillating and inspired: here a new Belmondo *policier, Flic ou Voyou,* again directed by Georges Lautner and looking exactly like the dull action-vehicles manufactured for the star last season, and the season before that; there the nearly one-a-month weepie with Annie Girardot; and everywhere the insufferable "comedies" à la *Cousin Cousine.* Although it obviously pleased Gaumont, the North American success of that film never ceases to stupefy the French; their constant suspicion that North American taste is more than a bit barbarous has only been confirmed by the critical and commercial failure of *Providence* and the unwonted acclaim given the films of Wertmüller and to *Preparez vos mouchoirs*—and with such evidence at hand one can only defend North Americans by attacking the French insistence that Romy Schneider is a great actress and that her (and Claude Sautet's) turgid little melodrama *Une Histoire Simple* is serious cinema.

Equally depressing is the news that Pascale Dauman, whose Pari-Films is one of the last of the independent distributors left in France, is seriously considering leaving the business: "Things are not getting better for serious films; they continue to get worse. *Passe Montagne* and *La Tortue sur le Dos* were both disasters. *Tortue* did no business in Paris, but it was even worse elsewhere: exactly 250 entrées in Lyon! So I make a bit of money with an Ozu; that doesn't help anyone really. I have a choice: I can go to work for Gaumont, like everyone else seems to be doing; I can continue to stay in the same powerless and depressing situation for the next ten years; or I can open a nice bar somewhere, drink and talk to my friends." Frédéric Mitterand, who runs five small independent cinemas and an equally small distribution company, is in much the same state of mind and financial situation, so that he admits he never knows from one week to the next if he can stay open. Paris is still the best city in the world for *cinéphiles,* but it may not stay that way much longer.

On the other hand, there are bits and pieces of good news. Jean-Luc Godard has come out of his Grenoble "exile" to start work on *Bugsy*: "I'm not sorry for the eclipse because my Grenoble experience was fascinating. But I now see that it was too abstract; I cut myself off from certain subjects and from a certain public. We must base our aims on the public's desires and prolong them." Godard plans to start shooting this winter in the U.S., Italy, and France, with Vittorio Gassman and Charlotte Rampling. "Bugsy" is, of course, Benjamin Siegel, the gangster who invented Las Vegas, who was active in the Hollywood of the late Thirties and early Forties, and who was killed by his own gang in 1947. Godard says he isn't, however, making a *policier*: "Certain events from the great days of Hollywood will serve as the background against which I will use a simple plot: a critic (Gassman) and his ex-wife (Rampling) investigate a star's disappearance, just as the actor was about to begin a film on Bugsy." It will be part fiction, part documentary, and Godard says he wants to include clips from famous gangster movies as well as comments by Coppola, Nicholson, Wenders, and Lillian Hellman.

Claude Miller has at last found the huge budget for his *Java* which he and Luc Béraud wrote together (as they did Miller's *La Meilleure Façon de Marcher, Dites-lui que Je l'Aime,* and Béraud's *La Tortue sur le Dos*). It takes place at the turn of the century in a large resort hotel. The manager imports a troupe of can-can girls who mix with the middle-class guests and cause upheavals in everyone's life. It is, according to Miller, "a cruel comedy. When a man suddenly loses his pants in the middle of a crowded room, that is funny—but not to this man. That's the tone I want, that mixture."

Maurice Pialat, perhaps the finest director now working in France—and one of the least known outside it, is also shooting again for the first time in years. *Loulou,* written by Pialat and Arlette Langman, is the story of a young wife's involvement with a brutal and violent "loulou" who terrorizes her husband as well. Things evidently turn out badly for all three. Isabelle Huppert and Gérard Depardieu have been signed already.



Godard: Coming out of exile

After her personal triumph at the last Toronto Film Festival, Ingrid Caven returned to Paris to restage her one woman show at the Théâtre 347, where she drew even larger crowds than she had earlier at Le Pigall's, partially because of the popularity of her record *Ingrid Caven Au Pigall's,* which was recorded live. When she gets back from her jury duty at the Berlin Festival she has four films lined up one after the other (and Fassbinder's *A Year with 13 Moons* ready for release): Mary Stephen's *Night Fire,* Serge LeRoi's film based on Nils' play *La Nuit de 13* (still untitled, although *Lady's Paradise* is the working title), a feature based on Genet's *Deathwatch,* and another directed by Daniel Schmid from his original scenario about a Russian countess who drives no less than seven men to suicide. All of that to be crowded around a singing tour of Europe (and North America in the spring) and the recording of a new album of French songs.

Peter Chatal, one of Fassbinder's favorite actors, has collaborated with Daniel Schmid on the staging of *Hans Eppendorfer, L'Homme de Cuir Parle Avec Hubert Fichte,* about two homosexuals, one with a leather fetish, who talk about their prison experiences, the impact of the media on their reentry into society, and other things of interest. Peter Chatel directs and plays Fichte (Michel Albertini plays Eppendorfer), and Daniel Schmid is responsible for the video sequences.

Even more trouble at the *Cinémathèque Française,* with lots of in-fighting over programming, control of the budget, and other such matters of power. Attendance has fallen off incredibly, partially because the films listed in the program are all too often not the films which actually get screened. As part of the recent Centre Georges Pompidou Paris-Berlin exhibit, for example, the Cinémathèque turned out a beautiful programme book *20 Ans de Cinéma Allemand 1913-1933,* but rather few of the promised films ever got projected at all, and fewer still at the times listed. Still, the text (mostly by Lotte Eisner) and the photographs are wonderful.

Lotte Eisner and the "Golden Age of German Cinema" are the subjects of a new documentary being directed by Canadian documentary maker Harry Sutherland (whose *Truxx* was a hit at the Toronto Festival) and shot by Bob Swaim (who directed *La Nuit de St Germain des Prés* and whose new feature *Granny* is about to get underway).

What famous "show-biz Bible" type newspaper has lost all its credibility as far as reviews and reports from France are concerned since they replaced their long-

continued on page 42

KUROSAWA

IN WHICH THE WIZARDS OF THE NEW HOLLYWOOD SIT AT THE FEET OF THE MASTER FROM JAPAN...

BY AUDIE BOCK

I met Akira Kurosawa on several after-hours occasions in Japan, one of which became an all-night conversation about films and filming. My own confirmation of the Kurosawa reputation—a conventional sense of time does not apply, for his personal activities any more than for his filmmaking—came last June via a 2 a.m. phone call from Tokyo. Kurosawa would arrive in New York in five days and needed an interpreter during the ten days he'd be in the States. I fit the bill.

Dersu Uzala (1976) took more than two years to make in an alternately sweltering and blizzarding Siberia; *Dodes'kaden* (1970) was shot in 28 days. No matter what pace Kurosawa sets for himself, those around him must struggle to match it.

The Japan Society of New York, which had invited him to come to the States "any time" in the hope of having him introduce a retrospective of his films, was suddenly confronted with a genial Kurosawa on returning from July 4th vacations. Too late to set up a retrospective, his New York hosts scrambled to arrange a dinner party with representatives of the Museum of Modern Art Film Department and the New York Film Festival.

Kurosawa came to New York by way of Florence, where he received the Donatello Prize, Italy's only national film award, for *Dersu Uzala*. He won it two years ago but was unable to attend the ceremony, so last year he came away with both the 1977 Donatello and a 1978 award from the European Film Academy for "Humanistic Contribution to Society in Film Production." But since he hadn't ventured to Hollywood to receive his Academy Award for *Dersu Uzala* in 1976, I suspected that all the film prizes in the world could not have lured Kurosawa from Japan. Sure enough, it turned out he had come west to visit his daughter and grandchild in Italy. In New York I learned that the Donatello Prize also includes a round-the-world first-class ticket on Alitalia. Kurosawa decided to take advantage of it to visit a few friends on the Coast. He told me he would need additional time in Los Angeles to look into the availability of movie horses. He was preparing to make another film in Japan, but worried that he wouldn't be able to find enough mounts for his samurai: "We used to use farm horses that had been trained during the War, but they've all been replaced by heavy machinery, so all you can get now is a few thoroughbreds with no movie experience."

I suggested he should get together with Alan J. Pakula, then wrapping up two years' of work on *Comes a Horseman*. "Fine," he said, "you arrange that when we get to Los Angeles." I'd been told I was to interpret for him and Francis Coppola later in San Francisco, but this was the first I'd heard that I was going to Los Angeles, too. I begged for a few hours to go back to Boston to pick up a change of clothes and promised to catch the seven a.m. plane to L.A. next day.

Bleary-eyed as I winged my way to "Rosu," as the Japanese call L.A., I tried to organize myself and my impressions of the man. I had met Kurosawa a little over a year before, when I was working on my book *Japanese Film Directors* in Tokyo. Since it took me a full six months to wrangle an interview with him, I expected him to be at best a fairly frightening, or at least uncooperative, person. He turned out only to be terribly shy. During the first interview he kept his eyes on his producer, Yoichi Matsue, while answering my questions. He wore sunglasses indoors—a necessity because of his sensitive eyes, not an affectation. Fortunately, his reticence vanished as he began to reminisce about his work with prewar directors and actors, and a few months later I participated in one of a series of "recollections sessions" he was in the habit of holding to discuss illustrious past and present colleagues. He announced that he had decided to write his autobiography. Not too long ago, this same man had contemplated not his memoirs but suicide, but he went on the wagon after finishing *Dersu Uzala* and since then has seemed in remarkably good spirits and health.

In L.A. I immediately begin trying to reach Alan Pakula through his step-daughter, a former student of mine from Yale. On the appointed day Pakula arrived straight from the dubbing studio "with the sound of hoofbeats still ringing in my ears." Pakula knew exactly what Kurosawa needed, recalling the mud-splattered final battle scene of *Seven Samurai* (1954) and the frightened steeds in *Throne of Blood* (1957): horses that can turn on a dime, act spooked, or stand still at the director's command even as the rider prods them to move ahead. Finding the two or three hundred Kurosawa had in mind would be a problem anywhere in the world, and Pakula warned that in the US he might encounter difficulties with the SPCA, if what he wanted to do looked dangerous.

"Of course it looks dangerous *on film*, but I've never caused any injury to an animal in the course of my work. The horses I've worked with always seemed to know I was the boss." Kurosawa comes from a very strict family of samurai descent and used to ride himself. He told Pakula that the horses walked a respectful circle around him as they returned to their paddock at the end of the day. Pakula was envious, having had a few authority problems working on his first western. "One day I was completely absorbed in coaching one of the riders, when suddenly I felt a warm wetness on my leg. The horse was relieving itself on me."

Pakula wondered how the light of California could be matched to the mists, rains and heavy atmospheres of Japan he knew from Kurosawa's films, if Kurosawa decided to do second-unit horse work in the US. Kurosawa explained that by using telephoto lenses trained close in on details of the action, as he had in the *Seven Samurai* final battle scene, the background and sky could be obliterated. As Kurosawa talked, it became apparent to Pakula and me that this scene, from a script Kurosawa had finished writing just before leaving for Italy, was already completely worked out, shot by shot, in the director's head.

Kurosawa's next Hollywood encounter was with the Schrader brothers. I had met Leonard Schrader several years ago when he was working on a script on the life of Rimbaud in Cambridge, and our paths have crossed repeatedly in New York and Tokyo. Leonard lived in Japan for several years when he was a professor of English and American literature at Koshisha University in Kyoto. He has long been a fan of Japanese film and has produced a huge, as yet unpublished volume of translations of source materials on Japanese directors. He and his wife Chieko, a Kyoto native, hope to do film work in Japan, so I knew they would be eager to meet Kurosawa.

I was not so sure about Paul Schrader. I knew he admired Ozu: he wrote what remains one of the most provocative critical studies of his films, *Transcendental*

Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), and certain sequences of his *Blue Collar* were filmed in an Ozu-esque way. I also knew he was a fan of Japanese gangster movies because of his critical writing on the subject, and because of *The Yakuza* (directed by Sidney Pollack, original story by Leonard, script by Paul) and the slaughter scene in *Taxi Driver* (directed by Martin Scorsese; script by Paul). But I didn't know how he felt about Kurosawa. When I suggested to Kurosawa that he meet Paul, he said he hadn't been *Blue Collar* (it hadn't opened yet in Japan), but that he had seen *Taxi Driver* and hadn't liked the music, finding it old-fashioned and inappropriate.

When the three finally met, music didn't get much play; they spent most of their time discussing scripts and writing. Paul wanted to know which of Kurosawa's scripts was the most difficult to write. Kurosawa's answer: *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960), which deals with government and business corruption in a huge construction project. "It was a controversial topic at the time I was writing the script, so it was impossible to say anything directly," Kurosawa recalled. "And the struggle to be roundabout made it take more than twice as long as my usual one month." Paul and Leonard told him of similar difficulties they had with *Blue Collar*, with interpersonal conflicts causing them much more trouble than the unions and the auto companies put together.

Leonard was curious about everything from how the fog was done in *Throne of Blood* to whether Kurosawa thinks about music while writing a script. Dry ice and US Army smoke machines left over from the Korean War answered the first questions, and the second got a definite yes. For Kurosawa, characterization is the primary element of script development, and sound plays an integral part in creating personality. The idea of musical themes for individual characters in *Seven Samurai*, for example, emerged in the course of writing, and Kurosawa works with his composer at the piano on every film as soon as shooting begins.

The longer Kurosawa stayed in California and talked with people who make movies, the more animated he became. The tall, tired man who stepped off the Concorde in New York and spent most of his time in that city resting, was now urging the Schrader brothers not to leave. He had complained about the heat and the over-airconditioning in New York, but L.A.'s second-degree smog alerts and temperatures over 100°F did not seem to bother him in the least.

His moment of highest enthusiasm in Los Angeles was a luncheon with George Lucas and Charles Weber, President of Lucasfilm Ltd., followed by a round-table chat with the current Lucasfilm "family": the directors and producers of the sequels to *Star Wars* and *American Graffiti*. We were to see Lucas again in San Francisco, but he had come down specially so that his people could meet Kurosawa, too. Kurosawa apologized to Lucas for not having seen *Star Wars* yet—it was just opening in Japan when he left. He had seen *American Graffiti* though and liked it a great deal.

After a Japanese lunch, Lucas led us into a conference room and introduced the men seated around the huge table: Gary Kurtz and Irvin Kershner, producer and director of *Star Wars II;* Howard Kazanjian and Bill Norton, producer and writer-director of *More American Graffiti*, (working title, *Purple Haze*). These members of "The Film School Generation," as Paul Schrader labels himself and his contemporaries, took Kurosawa by surprise. He had no idea that his work was a major part of their education, that they had even studied some of his films shot by shot. They fired questions at him, and he enjoyed every minute of it.

The most tenacious grilling came from Irv Kershner, the veteran of the group. He wanted to know how Kurosawa used telephoto lenses on the set in *Red Beard*. When Kurosawa said he

Kurosawa signs Les Blank's T-shirt (top left); K. with Howard Kazanjian, Bill Norton and George Lucas (top right); Coppola's limo breaks down at the Blackpoint Festival (right).

used up to 500mm lenses, Kershner and the others protested that 500mm lenses would make the lighting difficult. Kurosawa explained that he coordinates lighting, blocking of actors and the movements of the several cameras he uses not by elaborate storyboarding, but by many hours of rehearsal, so that "...the lighting technicians, the cameramen and actors have run through each scene enough times to know exactly who moves where and when, so the actual shooting is usually completed in one take." The Lucas family agreed that if you tried to get people in Hollywood to do that you'd have terrible problems with the unions. Kurosawa replied that film stock, rather than unions, is the big problem in Japan. He is often charged with squandering, but he claims his multicamera method is so efficient that there is no waste.

Kurosawa's staff tout him as "the greatest editor in the world," so the Lucas people were quite naturally curious about his editing procedures. They were surprised to hear that Kurosawa doesn't shoot first and edit later, Hollywood style. Instead he edits as he goes, day by day. Rehearsals go all morning, a sequence is shot in the afternoon, and he edits in the evening, usually putting in 12-hour-plus days. "If I didn't have the previous day's rushes fully edited, I couldn't set the pacing for the next day's shooting. The pacing has to be established as you go; it's too late to correct it if you wait till all the shooting is completed." Once shooting is over, he has the final cut in the can within a week.

The discussion also touched on the merits of color versus black and white, and Kurosawa's own painting of the sets for *Dodes'kaden*. Kurosawa said his experimenting with color began with the actual color of the ground—an unnaturally brilliant orange—at the open location near Tokyo's Haneda airport. The crew found out later that the orange ground was the result of cadmium pollution. They were fortunate shooting had taken only 28 days; longer exposure might have proved fatal. The Lucas people recalled that Kurosawa had made an entire film much earlier about the fear of radiation pollution, *Record of a Living Being* (1955).

The meeting ended with Lucas explaining to Kurosawa how much the Lucasfilm people admire the Japanese director. For perhaps the first time, it dawned on Kurosawa that he is an institution. He remarked to Lucas, "If I think of John Ford as a father, I guess that makes you my children."

Three different parties met us at the San Francisco airport, all wanting us to go different places. Without much hesitation we opted for the Coppola limousine, occupied by Wim Wenders (now writing and directing *Hammett* for the Coppola Company) and Tom Luddy, director of the Pacific Film Archive at the University of California at Berkeley. The big blue Mercedes, with the license plate "FFC" hidden in the trunk is the spoils of a flamboyant wager with Paramount. Coppola had assured them *The Godfather* would easily gross over $50 million. "Sure, Francis," they said. "It will," he countered, "and when it does, you owe me a limousine." "Sure, Francis," they said. When the minutes reports came in that the take had topped $50 million, Coppola picked up the phone, ordered the limousine, and had the bill sent to Paramount. They paid it.

Everything went well on the long drive to Coppola's country estate until we stopped to look in on the Blackpoint Festival, an open-air blues event. Wenders, like his protagonist in *Alice in the*

Coppola cooks up a simple Italian country feast (top left); Matsue, K., Tom Luddy, Coppola and Wenders chew the fat (top right); Coppola, Bock and K. watching Apocalypse Now *(right).*

Cities, played with his polaroids and panoramic cameras, taking pictures of everyone instead of talking. The festival music was excellent, the barbecue chicken was just fine, and the people were wonderfully friendly, but the limousine wouldn't start when we tried to leave. We sat in the blazing noonday sun for over an hour while various emergency measures failed and passersby hooted "Get a Volkswagen!" The hero of the day was filmmaker Les Blank, who lent us a Volkswagen van. Les has used the van to cover the South while making his music-and-society documentaries (notably *Always for Pleasure*, about the New Orleans Mardi Gras). Tom Luddy managed to drive it, with Kurosawa and Matsue sitting in front among all the dangling doodads and decals. Wenders, Luddy's friend Monique and I lay flat in the two or three feet of space between the ceiling and the converted rear of the van. Monique tried to sleep, Wenders read a book, and I tried to keep breathing. From up front, Kurosawa assured us "this is nothing compared to location hunting in Siberia."

Kurosawa and Coppola were already friends by correspondence. Some time ago Coppola and a friend decided it was high time Kurosawa be given a Nobel Prize, and they took it upon themselves to nominate him. They received a curt reply from Stockholm to the effect that they had no authority on which to make such a recommendation. News of the incident got out, and many accused Coppola of trying to get a film director nominated so that he himself could win someday. But Kurosawa, who knew Coppola chiefly as the director of *The Godfather*, the film that brought people back into the languishing movie theatres of Japan and broke every box office record there, heard about what had happened and wrote Coppola a letter of thanks.

Coppola received us at his country place informally, clad in a rumpled pyjama-like white Indian outfit. He had just seen *The Bad Sleep Well*, and bubbled away about it to Kurosawa: "That wedding scene is absolutely perfect. I wish I could make something that good. It's better than Shakespeare!" Kurosawa informed him that the Japanese critics had raked him over the coals for it, but Coppola insisted that they couldn't have known what they were talking about. (Leftist critics took Kurosawa to task for not naming names in the film.) We spent the remainder of the day swimming, tasting the new wine from the Coppola vineyards, and consuming the feast the director himself cooked for us. Asked about the origin of the unfamiliar delicacies covering the table, Coppola dismissed them as "just simple Italian country cooking, with a few Filipino dishes thrown in." It was nearly midnight when we left for San Francisco. We cancelled our hotel reservations since Coppola insisted that we stay at his city house.

The next day brought the curious event for which my interpreting services had originally been requested. One of Kurosawa's associates works for an advertising agency in Japan and had somehow prevailed upon the director to appear, with Coppola, in a television commercial for a Japanese whisky. When everything was ready Coppola led us downstairs to his luxurious basement screening room to see a locked ten minutes of *Apocalypse Now*. While Kurosawa and Coppola watched and talked, floodlights beamed on us and the cameras started to roll. Kurosawa gently requested a rerun without all the obstruction, emphatically impressed with what he saw. "War films rarely

Seven Samurai

look realistic to me, but this is the first truly frightening battle footage I've ever seen."

Back upstairs in the living room Coppola and Kurosawa continued their discussion of the mammoth film of the Vietnam War as they were being blocked for the whisky-drinking scene. Someone warned Coppola not to be startled—the glasses contained no whisky, only tea. He objected, demanding truth in advertising: "If I'm going to plug this stuff, we're going to drink it." Kurosawa laughingly agreed to indulge, even though he's officially quit drinking. The commercial, which concentrates on the two directors chatting while watching the film and then drinking (with a voice-over promo for the whisky), shows a few cutaways to the *Apocalypse* footage. (It will be shown only in Japan.)

Kurosawa next toured the American Zoetrope facilities with Coppola as guide. When we looked in on the dubbing of the remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Kurosawa expressed real envy: the computerized sound system at American Zoetrope is more advanced than anything in Hollywood, and Kurosawa often complains that filmmaking and projecting facilities in Japan are little better than they were 20 or 30 years ago. He also marveled at the video editing setup Coppola has in his private office. "With the press of a button I can do a wipe or a dissolve," boasted Coppola. "It's all on tape, so I don't mess up the actual work print." Kurosawa wanted to see the rest of *Apocalypse Now*, but Coppola explained that the sound was being mixed and the film consequently in pieces. "It's been a very trying job to get 52 hours of perfectly good footage down to about three and a half to show in the movie theaters," he confessed. Coppola's stories of typhoon destruction and growing insanity during the shooting in the Philippines all sounded "familiar" to Kurosawa, who had nearly been killed with all his crew on several occasions in Japan as a result (usually) of natural catastrophes. Legend has it that a Japanese inn keeps a horribly damaged room carefully preserved; the owner likes to show it to favoured guests, proudly proclaiming "Akira Kurosawa slept here."

Coppola also talked at great length about his future projects; Kurosawa listened and gave occasional advice. When Coppola announced that he had been captivated by Japan on a visit there and would like to return for a year or so, I was surprised to hear Kurosawa offer to see to his needs. No young Japanese director has attained protégé status with Kurosawa, but he really does seem to respond to Coppola as to a son. (Kurosawa's own son works in television in Japan, a medium his father despises.)

The last major Bay Area event of the trip was a screening and dinner organized by Tom Luddy in Berkeley. Given a choice of what film he would like for a special afternoon showing, Kurosawa asked for *Ikiru* (1952), and promised to come and extend a greeting to the audience at the end. At the last minute he decided to watch the film himself: "I haven't seen *Ikiru* in a long time, and never with an American audience." The crowd of some 1,500 people, the largest in the Pacific Film Archive's history, did not fail to notice the arrival of the director, and I wasn't the only one sneaking sidelong glances at him to watch his reactions to his own work. Kurosawa told the audience afterward he had thoroughly enjoyed being among them: "Yes, everyone laughed in the right places," he joked. He was deeply moved by, and even a trifle nervous about the standing ovation he received. He thanked everyone for coming, then saying he felt filmmakers should speak only through their films, rushed off the stage.

During the 20-guest dinner at Chez Panisse after the screening, Wim Wenders stopped his photographing briefly to make a tribute speech. Quoting from a friend's poem written upon seeing *Ikiru* in Germany, he thanked Kurosawa for bringing a cinema of dignity to Europe and the world. Later it was constant musical chairs as various people vied to sit across the table from Kurosawa, and he and I barely had time to eat during the barrage of questions.

On the day of Kurosawa's departure for Tokyo, Coppola and Lucas breakfasted with him and talked of the future. On the way to the airport he was a completely different person from the man who arrived in New York ten days before. Now he was full of enthusiasm, gesturing animatedly, talking fast. Not only had he discovered a whole generation of his "children," but he seemed to have gained tremendous inspiration from them to carry out his own plans for revitalizing the Japanese film.

The Coppola-Lucas move to San Francisco, and Lucas' current plans to build a film research institute with the profits from *Star Wars* and *American Graffiti* have restored Kurosawa's hope for establishing a true "Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences" in Japan. He's seen for himself that these young film rebels have left Hollywood to go in the right direction.

Audie Bock *is the author of* Japanese Film Directors *(Harper and Row, 1978), and has taught courses on Japanese cinema at Harvard for four years. She will be teaching film this year at the University of California at Berkeley.*

Movie-lover's dream city, home of King Kong, Mean Streets, and Saturday Night Fever, where else but

NY, NY

By Harlan Jacobson

The difference between New Yorkers and tourists used to be immediately obvious. Tourists often looked up at the tall buildings. New Yorkers mostly looked down to see where the streets might be mined with affectionate remembrances from the animal life.

With the enactment of the Rin-Tin-Tin law last August, there are fewer instances of folks from Toledo gawking up at the Empire State building and finding themselves mired in King Kong's residue.

That should make a film addict's visit to New York all the more pleasant. New York is the greatest, gaudiest film set for which God ever invented Adolph Zukor. If one wants to ignore the discrepancy between the two New Yorks—the one of the descendants of J.P. Morgan and the other that looks like Calcutta at midnight—and escape into the movies, surely this is the city for it.

There are some 300 movie theatres in the five boroughs, plus numerous book stores, poster shops, and museums and groups with film programs, all catering to the film habit. When most visitors say "New York," accompanied by the usual gag and involuntary reach for their shoulder holster, they mean Manhattan, to which this article is restricted. There is so much to talk about, so half of the New York scene will be covered next issue.

Geography really isn't the best way to explain what's available, so I've grouped things by sensibility. There's a lot of overlap, which I expect to cause sneers of contempt, but then every filmgoer thinks the person to their right is an idiot and to the left, plain crazy.

For those who are not romantically stranded in bygone eras, there is what's happening in the Firstrun, then Walk, then Disco Boogie-Woogie Sensibility. This includes the new releases from the major and mini-major distributors, perhaps a few months earlier in some cases than they'd arrive in Bowling Green.

The two most notable concentrations of firstrun houses are on Third Avenue between 57th and 60th Streets, sometimes referred to as The Block, and on Broadway, which means the Times Square area in the mid-40s on the West Side.

The Block theatres have it made. Not only do patrons look like they jumped out of the display windows at Bloomingdales and ran across the street to stand in line hoping to get inside, but film producers, directors and sales executives come pleading to please let their picture play the theatres.

The two central complexes are the Baronet-Coronet, owned by Walter Reade Theatres, and the Cinema I & II, operated by Cinema 5. They are the heart of the film universe to the folks in the film biz, and as such they always have the latest pic that has Human Values. Bruce Lee never got within 10,000 miles of here. Woody Allen is often around trying to look like Woody Allen not looking like Woody Allen. He's there to either case the joint for future filming or to check the number of admissions going into his latest picture, no fool he.

Also in the area is the East Side and Trans-Lux East, and still more theatres are close by.

If you have time to kill before a performance, Bloomingdales is across the street from the Block. There both the clientele and the help all believe that six-inch, liver-colored fingernails are handy to have in case they need to scratch somebody's eyes out for a bargain. Those are few and far between, but you can walk around and have lots of fuel for muttering under your breath things about conspicuous consumption being the ruination of the country Frank Capra loved. Or you can hike over to the new

Citicorp Center at 53rd and Third and hit the pastry shops for croissants, etc., or the clam bar that makes a better oyster stew than does James Beard. It's pleasant to sit in the Citicorp atrium, one of the better eavesdropping zones.

Over on Broadway, firstrun fare is at its best at the Astor Plaza, or the State I & II. The Criterion and National also cater to big pictures, as does the RKO complex, but the latter usually in the action-mysterioso vein. Broadway is no longer simply for karate films, though it is solidly in the unsophisticated camp. The Ziegfeld at 54th and Sixth Avenue (or Avenue of the Americas) looks like a turn-of-the-century bordello (the design courtesy of Dolly Reade, the late Walter's wife), but it's a first-rate theatre.

There are lots of good cheap restaurants near Broadway, the best among them on the numbered streets. The Stage Deli is what out-of-towners think is delicatessen food, but what New Yorkers know is $6.95 for a sandwich. Skip it and hit the four million ethnic restaurants inhabiting 43rd-50th Streets, or drop down to Dubrow's at 38th and 7th Avenue in the Garment district for the best deli around served with drama and disdain, two products New York could still bottle and sell.

After the movie, it's a short walk or cab to Studio 54 at 54th and Eighth Avenue. You can apply for Early Rejection and get it over with if owner Steve Rubell is being kind that night. Otherwise you'll have to remain and beg to be rejected till 4 a.m. The girls walking the streets in that area are not hookers (who are further down Eighth Avenue), but psychiatric social workers. They've taken to cruising the area looking for Studio 54 rejects to build their private practices. Stammer a little and say "Rosebud" and you can get them down to $20 an hour.

Closely allied to the Firstrun Sensibility is not the Secondrun Sensibility for which you can check the papers, but the Bryn Mawr Don't Touch Me But Stimulate Me, St. Augustine, Aesthetic. In this category you find recent foreign films including those made by Robert Altman and protégés. New York has an unusually high number of such films, a fifth of which during any given year get their start via the N.Y. Film Festival in the fall.

One good haunt is the 68th Street Playhouse on 3rd Avenue, which has a regular diet of French and Italian films. The theatre is owned by Meyer Ackerman, a partner in Quartet Films, a recent but active importer of such films. Chabrol and Rohmer films, etc., stop here from time to time, which may be food for thought. That's all you'll get, as the theatre has no concession counter (feet do not stick to the floor). A cheapie for a bite is up 3rd Avenue a few blocks for a slice of Ray's pizza, which wouldn't cut it anywhere but here.

Other good theatres regularly visited by the Bryn Mawr set include the Plaza, a tudor style living room at 58th and Madison; the Paris, booked by the veteran Duncan MacGregor; the Festival, around the corner at 57th and 5th Avenue, the Cinema III in the Plaza Hotel on Central Park South at 5th Avenue, which is a tiny theatre that takes advance performance reservations from the like of Jackie O. for $5 a seat, a policy that eliminates the shoulder rubbing with the riff-raff and allows for leisurely rambling through the hotel lobby. Warning: Don't touch the food in the Plaza restaurants, which are serving Rotary Club luncheons at Lutèce prices.

The Cinema Studio, across town at 66th and Broadway, recently twinned its smallish plant thanks to a cash infusion from the French powermakers, Gaumont. New Yorker Films head Dan Talbot operates the theatres as well as his own New Yorker importing firm. Talbot specializes in Fassbinder-Herzog-Wenders et al axis, and since his tie-up with Gaumont now gets the Rohmer, etc., group of films.

The Gemini I & II at 64th Street and 2nd Avenue mixes first run foreign and domestic films. You can show up at Maxwell's Plum afterwards at 64th and 1st Avenue, where it's Halloween every night, but better yet is to avoid the quacks and head for the Duck Joint at 74th and 1st for the real thing—a good duck dinner for $8, plus extra for wine and dessert. It's Milos Forman's favorite spot.

The Tower East, Paramount, Beekman and Little Carnegie also get the Sensitive Sensibility from time to time, as does the Quad down in the Village on 13th Street, between 5th and 6th Avenues.

Speaking of sensitive, that brings the New York film wanderer into the I Don't Understand It, But It Must Be Art School, which has obvious ties to the Bryn Mawr group, but the latter has clearly opted for the safe dinner party topic when discussing films. Devotees of the I Don't Understand It School have great fun dropping the title of the latest film they've seen and then watching everyone ferret deeper either into their insecurities or the ragout before them.

Often this includes groups funded by the National Endowment for the Arts or the State Council of the Arts. Notable are the Global Village at Broome and Mercer Streets in the Village; the Collective at White Street below Houston (pronounced How stun); the Millenium on 4th Street between 2nd Avenue and the Bowery.

There's also the Film Forum on Vandam Street three blocks south of Houston, which has had a good spray of political films recently, and Entermedia at 12th Street and 2nd Avenue. The Entermedia recently ran an American Mavericks series that displayed the works of George Romero, Josef Von Sternberg, King Vidor, Vicki Polon and Kenneth Locker, Robert Downey, John Carpenter and many others, in one angry film festival.

Uptown there's the Whitney Museum at 75th and Madison which runs both video and film programs, recently including a Children's Television Workshop retrospective, a Suzan Pitt showing of animation, and the 1979 biennial film and video peek, featuring films from the likes of Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas and others.

The Museum of Modern Art has fine thematic lecture series on Wednesday and Saturday evenings pegged to the showing of films and appearances of special guests. Particularly memorable was last year's series on the screenwriter that was visited by such writers as Newman and Benton and Samson Raphaelson.

Once the New York visitor has exhausted his intellect on the I Don't Understand It genre, he can choose to speak in tongues by partaking of the Sacco & Vanzetti What Are They Up To Now cell. This sensibility is a bit harder to feed easily but it can be done.

The most accessible is at the Bombay Cinema, which has a weekly film change of Indian films, with occasional subtitles in English, across from the overrated Russian Tea Room and Carnegie Hall, at 57th Street and 7th Avenue. Spanish and Mexican films are available on Seventh Avenue in the high 40s.

True adventurers can go to Chinatown and hunt up the Chinese films with Mandarin subtitles off Chatham Square or at the Grand Street Community Center on Grand at East Broadway. A friend who is addicted to Chinese films ("because they put so much MSG in the filmstock") says there is uncertainty as to whether what you are seeing is from the Mainland, but since January 1st there is no Taiwan.

At Columbia University there are or have been Bengali student associations and Iranian student associations, among others. The Yugoslav Press and Cultural Association at 488 Madison Avenue has a film series, if you want to be a Slav about it. Yiddish films show up at the YMHA at 92nd Street and Lexington on the East Side, too.

There's a lot more for the film fan to take in on a visit to New York. Next month the film guide to New York will take up the good retrospective houses that thrive here, plus the chance encounters likely for getting caught in the middle of an on-location shoot and seeing a film star, thereby heightening reality. And there are some things to do just because wise men fish here. Stay tuned.

Harlan Jacobson *should know. Once a young lad from Toledo, he kept his feet clean and became a* Variety *staff writer.*

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JEAN RENOIR

By Naomi Wise

It's that time of the year when the days are hot, but not yet oppressive, and the nights just cool enough for sleep. The morning sunlight slants across a wide, bright meadow, glances off the clumps of oak and chestnut trees, gleams wickedly along the narrow, swift river at the bottom of the slope, and loses itself in the stand of the forest at the western edge of the field. A few early picnickers are spreading their blankets on the grass.

At the foot of an oak tree, a boozy old reprobate lies snoring like a bear. His heavy jaw hangs open, and a bottle of wine teeters on his belly, rising and falling with every breath. Free at last of respectability and guilt, of art and murderous passion, he will nap and tipple all day long. A young girl wanders up to him, clutching her thin sweater across her chest and shivering with the long night's chill. She nudges his shoulder with her foot. "What's your name," she asks, in the clear uncritical tone of a child. Opening one blue eye, he mumbles whatever lies come into his head. "Boudu," he rasps, then, "Joseph," and finally "Clara Wood," and rolls over, already snoring again.

A handsome young couple push a rowboat off the riverbank, and leap into it as it enters the swift current.

Suddenly, a noisy, vivacious trio arrives, trying to balance themselves, their baskets, and a guitar on a tiny motorbike. Flirting and laughing in the mixed accents of back-country Provence, they disentangle themselves from the bike and tip it lightly into the grass. Toni squats in a patch of camomile, idly strumming his guitar, while Maria and Josepha unpack the baskets (Maria's *ratatouille*, Joseph's *escabèche*, Toni's bottles of *Rioja.)*

A big, new-model car pulls off the dirt road at the top of the meadow and tears across the grass, roiling the dirt behind it. The driver, dressed in the good coat of a Provençal foreman, leans out the window, shouting, "Josepha, you bitch, get in here right now!" At this moment, the old boozer chooses to wake up and wander over. He pulls a filthy rag from his pocket and proceeds to wipe the windshield. "Eh, *mon vieux*, I know you," he says. "You're Battala, trying to pass yourself off as Albert. And *both* of you are bastards. Got a cigarette for me?" The two men look into each other's eyes for a moment. Albert guns his motor and spins a fast U-turn, knocking the drunk on his backside. "Better to be a murderer than a shit like that guy," the drunk chuckles, and lumbers back to his tree.

A battered school bus with a picture of a cowboy hand-painted on its side pulls along the dusty road, snorting and backfiring, and discharges a disorderly cargo of journalists, laundresses, assorted relatives, and babies. It's a publishing cooperative, celebrating the record-breaking sales of their latest penny-dreadful Western. A few minutes later, a tiny car parks beside the bus, rattling a trail of old shoes and tin cans. A short fellow in cowboy chaps emerges with his smiling bride, and the publishing group rushes them en masse, shouting with joy. Amadée Lange and his Valentine are home at last.

Battala, disguised as a priest, rides up on a donkey and accosts the cowboy: "You owe me some money," he sneers. The cowboy pulls out his water-pistol. "Bang, bang, you're dead," he shouts. The priest stares at him for a second, then spurs his ass down the road, while the laundresses point and shriek with laughter. "Such a man doesn't deserve to live," Valentine murmurs. "Better to be a murderer than a shit like that," adds Lange.

On the river, a rowboat glides of its own volition, while a good-looking young man and a fresh, pretty girl drowse in the stern, their feet trailing in the water.

The cool notes of a flute are heard in the distance. At the edge of a forest, we find a straightbacked, bald German officer sniffing a flower as he strolls along with the elegant flautist. Both wear spotless white gloves. Nearby, a small, charming Jew and a tough French mechanic share a plateful of caviar-topped deviled eggs and a bottle of Grillet. Battala ambles by, dressed as a modish Parisian businessman, and steals an egg in passing. "Did you see that?" shouts the mechanic. "What a shit!" laughs the Jew.

Just on the other side of the forest, a vast field has been reserved for the reunion of the Veterans of the French Revolution. The ragtag veterans whoop and shout, embrace and kiss, and break into choruses of *La Marseillaise*. While the plump, bearish painter sets up his easel, Bomier and Louison slip off into the

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
In order of appearance

Early picnickers: *La Fille de l'eau*, 1924; *Nana*, 1926; *Charleston*, 1927, and others.
The old reprobate: *Tire au flanc*, 1928; *La Chienne*, 1931; *Boudu sauvé des eaux*, 1932.
The young girl in a sweater: *The Little Match Girl*, 1928.
Couple in a rowboat: *Une Partie de campagne*, 1936.
Provençale trio: *Toni*, 1934.
Publishing cooperative, Battala: *Le Crime de M. Lange*, 1935.
Flute player group: *La Grande Illusion*, 1937.
Veterans of the French Revolution: *La Marseillaise*, 1938.
Chesnaye and company: *Rules of the Game*, 1939.
Three girls from India: *The River*, 1951.
Commedia del'Arte: *The Golden Coach*, 1953.
Cancan girls and impresario: *French Cancan*, 1955.
Luscious brunette, man with hat: *Picnic on the Grass*, 1961.
Jeanne Moreau, old beggars: *Le petit théâtre de Jean Renoir*, 1969.
Others at the picnic: characters from *Le Bled*, 1929; *On purge Bébé*, 1931; *La Nuit du carrefour*, 1931; *Les bas fonds*, 1936; *La Vie est à nous*, 1936; *La Bête humaine*, 1938; *Swamp Water*, 1941; *The Southerner*, 1944; *Diary of a Chambermaid*, 1945; *Woman on the Beach*, 1947; *Eléna et les hommes*, 1956, and others.

woods alone, unnoticed by the crowd. Meanwhile, Louis XVI plods across the field, munching a tomato. Perspiring heavily under the midday sun, he stops in the shade of a tree to remove his embroidered jacket and roll down his silk hose.

A strangely mixed party parks at the edge of the dirt road. Some are in jalopies, some in Jaguars. Chesnaye, the twin brother of the fellow with the caviared eggs, emerges from a limousine with his charming Austrian wife. His grinning driver looks more like a poacher than a proper chauffeur, but who could help preferring charm to propriety? The gamekeeper opens the limo's trunk to reveal an astounding array of edibles—cases of Mouton Rothschild of various vintages, Parma hams, loaves of *paté*, marinated vegetables, and a carefully-stacked pyramid of *tartes tatins*. Following the rest of the group, a new Bugatti pulls up with rakish haste, driven by a sharp-faced woman in a slouch hat. The plump, bearish man in the passenger seat sighs with relief at their safe arrival, and hands Chesnaye a message: the general will not be able to attend this picnic, but the aviator may arrive later.

Battala sidles up to the group, eyeing the wines and tarts, and introduces himself as a former publisher of some distinction. Octabe looks at him and snorts: "I thought we'd gotten rid of you a long time ago." Their eyes meet for a second. Battala excuses himself and scurries away. "Better be a murderer than a shit like that," laughs the gamekeeper.

As the afternoon proceeds, others arrive, find a space among the blankets and tablecloths, and settle down to feast and drink. Trainmen, vamps, adventuresses, sailors and artists, even some backwoodsmen from the wilds of America, all are welcomed warmly. Provençale laborers nibble pheasant, Parisians sample *escabèche*, Carolina swampers lick *ratatouille* from their fingers. Three girls from India stroll along the river bank, smoking a single, shared cigarette.

Next to the river, a Commedia del'Arte troupe swiftly constructs a little stage, while the leading lady cools her feet in the rushing water, distractedly watching the passage of an empty rowboat. A flock of cancan dancers approach in a burst of color. "*We* were supposed to be performing here tonight," they shout. "What are you doing here?" The Commedia actress jumps up, shouting insults in an impossible mixture of French, Spanish, and Italian. At this moment, just as the two troupes face off, a laughing, luscious brunette runs stark naked out of the woods, pursued by a middle-aged gentleman wearing only a hat. Noticing the crowd, they plunge into the river and splash downstream toward the forest again. The cancan girls applaud, then strip off their own clothes and leap into the water, followed by the Commedia troupe.

As the sun goes down, the little stage becomes the center of attention. The crowd slowly gathers by the river bank to get good seats for the evening's entertainment.

Out of nowhere, Battala appears backstage. "You can't stage this show without my permission," he hisses.

"Well, give us your permission, then," the cancan impresario smiles.

"Only if you turn over all the profits to me."

"What profits? This show is free!"

"Not any more, it isn't. But if you prefer, I'll take *her* instead," pointing to the Commedia's leading lady.

At this moment, the director emerges from the woods, brushing the dirt from the dress of a flushed, pretty girl with a thin sweater tied around her shoulders. He's a plump, bearish man with a tight, Gallic grin. Seeing Battala, he grimaces, "*Toi, encore?*" Battala explains his proposition, and the director hoots.

"*Tiens*, what if we split the admissions, half to you, half to me?" the businessman offers.

"I've had it with you," the fat man growls. "Every one may have his reasons, but *your* reasons are terrible!" He bodily lifts the businessman and throws him into the river.

"But I can't swim," howls Battala. "*Tant pis*," growls the director. "You've had your chance a hundred times over. Ca *suffit*." The businessman flounders downriver in the swift current, sputtering and bubbling and shouting for help, to sink or swim in some other place.

The show begins, with Commedia and cancan alternating numbers followed by a plump man in a bear-suit conducting a small orchestra. Jeanne Moreau, in a special guest appearance, sings a pretty song from the Belle Epoque. The little match girl, warmed at last by wine and love, offers her seat and her thin sweater to a couple of old beggars as the cool night descends. The old drunk slips off to the edge of the forest, watching the show from the corner of his eye as he pees against an oak tree. Peering out from backstage, the director sees, and smiles, and watches the night fall.

As the show ends, and the applause echoes through the meadow, the tipsy match-girl jumps onto the stage. Wine has made her bold, love has made her eloquent.

"Good people, we are all here because of one man," she shouts. "For more than fifty years, we have lived out his dreams. We have shared his idealism, his bitterness, his clarity and his endless love. He sees us as we are, and we owe our very lives to him."

Five or six cast members emerge from backstage—a cowboy, a flute-player, an Austrian princess, and a fresh young woman among them—dragging between them a plump, bearish, blushing man, with a jaw of many chins and the tight, slanting grin of the Gauls. The audience leaps to its feet, shouting and clapping. On into the starry night rings the applause for Jean Renoir.

Renoir, Jean: 1894 - 1979.

Naomi Wise *is a San Francisco freelance writer.*

1958.

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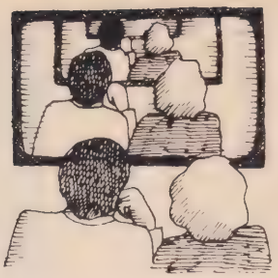


Since we last published a round-up of feature films (and feature-related shorts) available to the home-movie watcher, a number of new films and sources have come to our attention. A run-down follows:

In Super-8, Ivy Film (165 West 46 Street, NYC 10036) has unearthed and released a 26-minute TV pilot, directed by none other than Woody Allen back in 1962, and starring Louise Lasser and Alan Alda. *The Laughmaker*—as the little gem is called—sells for $79.95 (it's also available for rental in 16mm).

Super-8 Studios (230 Hyde Street, San Francisco 94102) now has prints for sale of *The Last Rally* (at $59.97)—a film professionally shot in Super-8 (wide-screen and stereo sound, no less) in Washington at the height of the Watergate scandal. While you're in touch with Super-8 Studios, ask for a copy of their Super-8 equipment catalog—surely one of the most comprehensive around.

In the East, the 88-page equipment catalog offered by Super-8 Sound Inc. (95 Harvey Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02140) is equally all-inclusive and a lot slicker (it's 8 1/2 x 11, has 130 photographs and 30 line drawings). Well worth the $2 they're asking.

Some additional availabilities in Super-8: Super Duper 8's (72 Wooster St., NYC 10012) has 7 R-rated features, including *Stateline Motel* with Ursula Andress and *The New Adventures of Snow White*. Cinema Concepts (91 Main St., Chester, Conn. 06412) has a couple of comedy compilations that are exclusive to them (and they're also available on video-cassette): *The Golden Age of Comedy* and *When Comedy Was King*. Milestones Movies (212 Shelton Rd., Monroe, Conn. 06468) has a fine little catalog that includes such goodies as Alexander Korda's star-studded *Fire Over England* as well as a broad range of classic silents. Thunderbird Films (P.O. Box 65157, Los Angeles 90065) has recently brought to our attention releases in Super-8 such as: *City Lights, The Great Dictator, A Woman of Paris, An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge, The Caddy, Whatever Happened to Baby Jane, Night of the Living Dead, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and *Rashomon*. Ask to be put on their mailing list.

Rondella Enterprises (26740 Hillview Street, Highland, Ca. 92346) always has an interesting selection of trailers available in Super-8, including (we see by some of the recent notices) *King Kong, Gone With the Wind, The Court Jester, Snow White*, and *One Million Years B.C.*

In the 16mm field, International Film Distributors (175 Bloor Street E., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4W 1C8) is offering mint-condition newly-struck prints (at $600-$1000 apiece) of such classics as *High Noon, The Red Pony, It's a Wonderful Life*, the Orson Welles *MacBeth*, and many others. And Halco Films (6311 Yucca Street, Suite 752, Los Angeles 90028) has a new catalog out of their availabilities in 16mm (many films also sold in Super-8 format), including *Things to Come, The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and plenty of trailers, television shows and compilation films.

While, in the newest format of all, Norman R. Selinger & Associates, 5415 Butler Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20016 has a catalog chock-full of films on videocassette at $50 and $75 per film. Among those listed: *GI Blues, King Creole, Farewell to Arms, Cleopatra, The Hustler, The Longest Day, Of Human Bondage, The Paper Chase, The Robe, Blackmail, Sabotage, The Hot Rock, M*A*S*H, Hello Dolly, Dementia 13, Night of the Living Dead*, and *Ugetsu*. Tell 'em we sent you.

Eddie Anderson

PARIS JOURNAL

continued from page 31

time and internationally-respected Paris correspondent with an accountant, and a couple of amateur stringers to hack out reviews?

French television workers are on strike, and the prospect of their continuing is not unpleasant. Movie attendance is up by about 30%; entrées at the Louvre are doubled; and recent man-on-the-street interviews have disclosed that the French are not entirely unhappy in rediscovering reading and conversation. It makes a nice dream: to live in the sole industrialized Western nation which does not have television.

David Overbey *is* Take One's *Paris correspondent.*

Photos for this issue

Akira Kurosawa story — all photos by **Audie Bock.**

Mardi Gras story — all photos by **Michael P. Smith**, except for that of Les Bank, which was taken by **Maureen Gosling.**

By Tim Onosko

Pay-TV report

In September, 1964, an organization calling itself the Joint Committee Against Pay-TV was successful in placing a referendum question on the election ballot in the state of California. Proposition 15, as it was known, asked voters to ban pay-TV in that state, even though the single pay-TV company in operation was meeting with only very limited success. The Committee, originally formed by theater owners and film exhibitors, received support from the AFL-CIO, Parent-Teacher Associations, the National Federation of Women's Clubs and the three U.S. television networks, and launched a massive campaign employing what can only be interpreted as scare tactics.

By November 3, 1964, Californians were frightened enough to vote, by almost 2 to 1, to ban the fledgling medium. The real loser, however, was a former NBC executive, Sylvester "Pat" Weaver, the video visionary who created both the *Today* and the *Tonight* show and whose full-scale pay-TV operation, Subscription Television, Inc., was forced to close its doors. Weaver filed suit to question the constitutionality of the referendum question and won several years later, but his pay-TV systems remained closed, at a loss of more than $18 million.

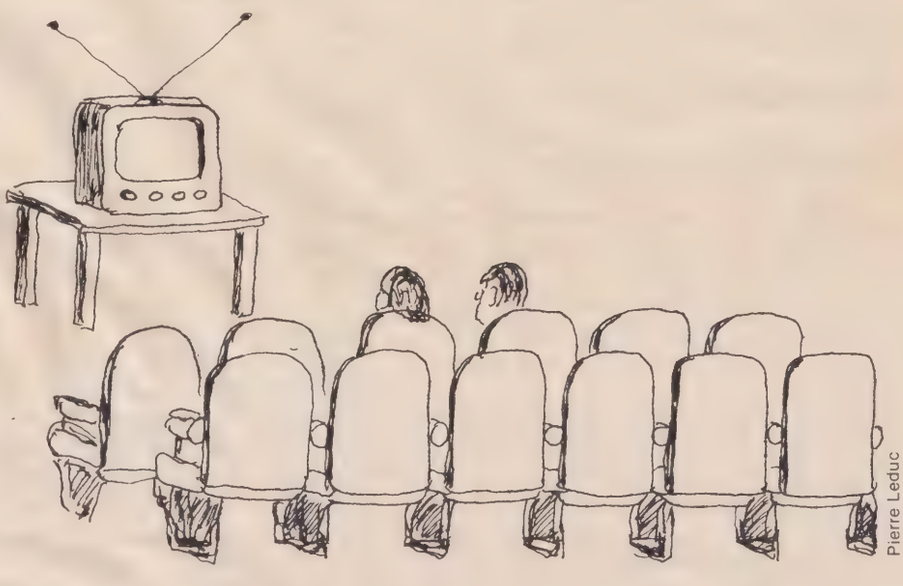
Though theater owners have felt secure with their victory for years, pay television has been revived. With inflation driving up ticket prices at the movie houses, a record number of color television sets in U.S. homes, cable television impressively penetrating middle-sized markets and, most importantly, the emergence of economically feasible communications satellite technology, 1978 became pay-TV's red-letter year.

As the name indicates, pay-TV—or subscription television, premium television, or "tollvision" (as *Variety* puts it)—is any service which furnishes subscribers with commercial-free programing which is otherwise unavailable via commercial, broadcast television. Naturally, this isn't to be confused with ordinary cable television, which mainly provides quality television signals and imports distant broadcast signals from other cities. Usually, for a monthly fee, pay-television subscribers receive a package of recent motion pictures approximately 6 to 18 months old, some specially produced programs and/or "live" cabaret performances, and sometimes sporting events which have been "blacked out" of broadcast television, or are deemed too esoteric for the commercial medium. Motion pictures still account for more than 75% of pay-TV fare and will, in all likelihood, remain the most important form of programing.

Since most major pay-TV services are delivered to the home via satellite and coaxial cable, thereby eliminating much chance of signal degradation, a signal can offer sparkling visual resolution and almost unparalleled audio quality. Even though most pay-television services resemble each other in some respects, there are differences among them which may affect their value. Since there is generally only one service offered in a community, viewers cannot, yet, "go shopping" for the best service. Here, though, is a summary of the state of pay-television as of December 1978.

Industry estimates vary as to the number of homes in the U.S. now subscribing to a pay service, but communications consultant Paul Kagan, who publishes the *Pay-TV Newsletter*, indicates there were approximately 2.5 million subscribing homes as of June 30, 1978, paying an average monthly fee of $8.27 per home. Subscriber rolls have been skyrocketing during the last half of the year, and Kagan estimates that there could be as many as 8 million subscribing homes by 1983. In any case, Americans will spend almost $250 million for pay-TV next year. The ABC and NBC of pay-TV are, respectively, Home Box Office, a subsidiary of Time/Life Inc., and Showtime, which has recently become a joint venture of Teleprompter, Inc. and Viacom (formerly CBS Films).

Home Box Office (HBO) is the "grandaddy" of modern pay-TV, and began in November, 1972, as a regionally distributed service for the Northeastern U.S. In 1977, it became the first independent television service to lease space on RCA's Satcom I communications satellite. HBO is credited, even by its competitors, with setting important trends, battling the FCC on major issues and almost single-handedly popularizing pay-television. HBO claims approximately 6.7 million viewers in almost 2 million homes making it, far and away, the largest service. It offers about 12 to 15 new film titles monthly, exclusive specials created expressly for them, and occasional sporting events and sports-oriented programs. A similar number of previously-shown film titles are included in a typical monthly schedule as "encores" for repeat viewing or for the bene-



Pierre Leduc

fit of new subscribers.

Showtime is a full-time (approximately 8 hours daily) service, like HBO. Both services share major film titles, but Showtime's schedule does not yet include many nonmovie types of programing. As of January 1, 1979, Showtime is the only pay-television service offered on the cable systems owned by its parent corporations. This will deprive HBO of approximately 13% of its present audience. Showtime has plans to produce original pay-television programing (including the first "made-for-pay" movie). Its subscribers number approximately 600,000 and, like HBO, is satellite delivered. Unlike HBO, it so far carries no sporting events.

The newest of the full-time pay services is Star Channel, a subsidiary of Warner Communications. Its fare consists of motion pictures and "Flash Specials," (their original programing). Even though there are presently only 80,000 subscribing homes, Star Channel is expected to grow rapidly due to Warner's resources and commitment to cable television. Warner is also the operator of QUBE, the two-way, interactive cable system in Columbus, Ohio. QUBE's computer-controlled and monitored system allows community polling, shopping via television and "narrow casting" to selected portions of its system. And there are several pay channels which offer everything from family films to exploitation pictures. Unike the Star Channel service, and the majority of other pay-TV operations, the QUBE subscribers are billed each month for the number of films they have viewed.

Prism and Fanfare are two regional, rather than national pay services, both of which rely heavily on local sports to entice prospective subscribers. Prism is distributed to cable systems via microwave in the Philadelphia area; and features sporting and entertainment events from the Spectrum, the city's popular entertainment and sports arena. Prism shows fewer films than any other full-time service. Fanfare, which is allied with Prism, is a similar service, tailored to the tastes of its southwestern U.S. audience. In cable systems where Prism is offered, as well as HBO, it has been successful in luring a substantial percentage of subscribers from the national service. But, in these situations, there is a small but surprising number of subscribers who take both services—bringing their monthly television bills past the $30 mark.

Clearly, Prism and Fanfare indicate that a portion of the pay-TV market is more interested in local and regional sports than in motion pictures. National satellite systems will have difficulty reaching these viewers. Films on Prism and Fanfare are booked and programed by another pay service, Hollywood Home Theater (HHT). Operating about as far from Hollywood as you can get, HHT feeds its films to leased space on Satcom I from its New York offices. The Extra Channel, as the service is known, is what the industry now calls a "mini-service," which premiers one new film title weekly, then fills the remainder of the week with "Encore" showings of previously run titles, and occasional specials. Operating only a few hours per day, Monday through Friday, HHT offers little, but its prices are low. Showtime and HBO charge $8 to $10 per month, while HHT and other minis usually retail for $4 to $5 monthly. HHT also claims to show "only the best," but it restricts programing to G or PG-rated titles.

Mini-services are becoming increasingly popular in the cable industry. They are both safe and cheap, making them cable television's closest equivalent to impulse buying. Some services, like Bestvision and Guest Pay, are "stand-alone" systems, meaning that the individual cable operators originate the programing, usually by playing videocassettes. The present quality of signals from stand-alone systems is far inferior to the satellite networks, but these operators are placing high hopes on future technology like the MCA/Philips videodisc, which will both increase quality and reduce costs. HBO and Showtime will also offer mini-services during 1979.

All of the systems discussed have been pay services distributed by cable television and, in rare cases, via microwave to high-rise and other large apartment complexes. The remaining pay-television operations in the U.S. are over-the-air subscription services, including American Subscription Television and National Subscription Television, both serving the Los Angeles market. Over-the-air systems may be the answer to providing pay-television to major urban markets where cable television either doesn't yet exist, or has failed to have an impact.

But, if American Subscription Television (ASTV) is setting a trend, it may be a costly one. ASTV, which began broadcasting July 23 on KWHY-TV, channel 22, charges customers $40 for installation of its system, $60 annually for rental of its terminal/signal decoder and invidually (50¢ to $3) for each film watched. ASTV's computer "sweeps" the decoder network periodically to determine each subscriber's monthly charges.

Other over-the-air systems include one in the Newark / New York area, Universal Subscription Television in Boston, and a system identified as Radio Broadcasting, proposed for the Philadelphia area. Paul Kagan says pay-per-view systems, like ASTV, "still have not proven themselves."

HBO, it seems, is continuing to lead the pay-TV industry. As of January, 1979, it is offering subscribers five originally-produced new programs per month, in addition to the usual package of films and sporting events. It continues to showcase comedy, which, says company spokesman Robin Ahrold, "has no place to go on network television," and often finds and features new talent before anyone else does. HBO's film selection is broad and often includes low-budget films, seldom-seen "sleepers" and "B" films. But there are rumblings of an anti-trust investigation. Not only does HBO control about two-thirds of the pay-TV marketplace, but it is also investing in new films, speculating in their eventual success in return for pay-television rights to the films. Among the films which HBO has invested in are *Magic, The Wild Geese, Who's Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?* and *Watership Down.*

HBO's competition also has their axe to grind, since HBO's contracts for non-motion picture programing excludes producers from selling the same product to another pay-television service. Lastly, HBO has been involved in a labor dispute with the Directors Guild of America, which has prohibited its members from working for HBO.

But even though HBO may have its problems, they are still regarded as the biggest with the best, and will continue to lead the pay-TV industry for years to come. What if pay-television continues its present growth and becomes the major economic force it is expected to be? Will it have an impact on the three commercial networks? "No," says Paul Kagan, "pay-television will never be big enough to affect network revenues," explaining that as the pay-TV market increases the network coffers grow, as well.

There are other scenarios for pay-TV which could also be worrisome. Will pay-TV's popularity grow to the point that the companies will try to introduce some forms of advertising? HBO's Robin Ahrold insists that it won't happen, citing the abscence of commercials as pay-television's major selling point. But a representative of the National Cable Television Association isn't as definite, saying that commercials may have a place on pay-television, but adding that it probably won't happen "within the next two years."

The major question, though, might be the original one raised by theater owners. What happens if audiences begin to prefer pay-television over theatergoing? Right now, theaters are supported, in large part, by concession sales, and the film industry as a whole has been bouyed by inflating ticket prices and producing "event" entertainment. If pay-TV robs the theaters of its audiences, it could kill the goose that lays its golden eggs.

Tim Onosko *is the author of* Funland USA, *a book on amusement parks.*

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No. 3 (Jan. 1967): An interview with Jean-Luc Godard; reviews of "A Fistful of Dollars"; "Loves of A Blonde", and "Farenheit 451". Sold out.

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No. 5 (June 1967): A series of articles on the Hollywood Blacklist (including personal reminiscences by Millard Lampell and Herbert Biberman); reviews of the films of Expo '67 and of "Accident", "Cul-de-sac", and "Au Hasard Balthazar". Sold out.

No. 6 (Aug. 1967): An interview with Canadian filmmaker Don Owen; the much-reprinted and oft-referred to "Intersex" article by Robert Russell; an interview with Kenneth Anger; Arthur Penn on "Bonnie and Clyde". Sold out.

☐ No. 7 (Oct. 1967): An interview with Jean Renoir, an article on Quebec filmmaker Jean-Pierre Lefebvre; reviews of "Warrendale", "Portrait of Jason", "Privilege", and "The Trip". $6.00

☐ No. 8 (Dec. 1967): An article on Richard Lester and "How I Won the War"; a report (by Joyce Wieland) on "North America's Second All-Women Film Crew"); reviews of "The Fearless Vampire Killers", "Persona", and "Ernie Game". $6.00

☐ No. 9 (April 1968): An article on Silvio Narizzano; William K. Everson on Laurel and Hardy; reviews of "The President's Analyst", "In Cold Blood", "The Battle of Algiers", and "Elvira Madigan". $5.00

No. 10 (June 1968): Alfred Hitchcock talking about some of the special effects used in "The Birds"; a report on Godard's visit to Hollywood (discussions with Sam Fuller, King Vidor, Roger Corman, and Peter Bogdanovich). Sold out.

☐ No. 11 (Sept. 1968): Analyses of film violence by Frederic Wertham and Paul Krassner; a selection from the letters of Groucho Marx; an interview with the creator of the special effects for "2001"; reviews of "Weekend", "The Green Berets", and "The Bride Wore Black". $5.00

No. 12 (Nov. 1968): A survey of the Cuban cinema (biographies and filmographies of four major directors); some comment by Roger Corman; Modecai Richler on writing for the movies; and a review of "Bullitt". Sold out.

VOLUME 2

No. 1 (published March 1969): Interviews with everyone involved in "Alice's Restaurant" (including Penn, Arlo, and Alice); an interview with Ingmar Bergman; a review of Godard's "One Plus One". Sold out.

☐ No. 2 (July 1969): Interviews with Frank Zappa, Fritz Lang and Alfred Hitchcock (the latter talking about "Rear Window"); reviews of "If", "In the Year of the Pig", "Teorema", "Salesman". $6.00

☐ No. 3 (Oct. 1969): Dynamite interviews with Peter Fonda and Sam Peckinpah; Bergman interviews himself (honest); Stan VanDerBeek writes about computer animation. $5.00

☐ No. 4 (Jan. 1970): Part One of the edited transcript of the 1947 HUAC hearings into Communist "infiltration" of the movie industry (witnesses include Jack Warner, Ayn Rand, and Ginger Rogers' mother). $6.00

☐ No. 5 (May 1970): Part Two of the HUAC hearings (with Dalton Trumbo, Alvah Bessie, Dore Schary, and Berthold Brecht); an article on Roman Polanski. $5.00

☐ No. 6 (July 1970): An interview with Jacques Tati; Joe Kane's article on B films about the Bomb; Costa-Gavras talks about "Z"; Wexler's Associate Producer on "Medium Cool" spills all the beans; a Hollywood bibliography; reviews of "Red", "Goin' Down the Road", and "Hospital". $3.00

☐ No. 7 (Sept. 1970): Interviews with the people involved with "American Revolution II"; an article by Mordecai Richler; a speech by FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson; reviews of "Joe" and "The Confession". $5.00

☐ No. 8 (Nov. 1970): Gene Phillips on homosexuality in the movies; Josef Skvorecky on the Czech New Wave; Mike Goodwin on Richard Rush. $5.00

☐ No. 9 (Dec. 1970): Interviews with Tex Avery and John Grierson; reviews of "Ryan's Daughter", "Trash", and "City Girl". $4.00

☐ No. 10 (March 1971): Our Ultimate Godard issue: A long interview with Godard and Gorin; reviews of four recent Godard films; an up-to-date filmography. $2.50

☐ No. 11 (June 1971): More Godard: photos from a notebook a complete bibliography; reviews of three more films. Also: nice pictures of Geneviève Bujold; a short story; and reviews of "La Hora de Los Hornos", "Maidstone", "Claire's Knee", and "El Topo". $2.50

☐ No. 12 (Oct. 1971): Roger Corman is interviewed and Laszlo Kovacs is written about: reviews of "Sunday Bloody Sunday", the Cannes Film Festival, "McCabe and Mrs. Miller", and "Drive, He Said". $4.00

VOLUME 3

No. 1 (published Dec. 1971): The famous (much reprinted since) Groucho Marx interview. Plus Joe Adamson's article "Duck Soup for the Rest of Your Life"; and some remarks by Stan Brakhage. Also reviews of "Mon Oncle Antoine", "Derby", and "Rip-Off'. Sold out.

☐ No. 2 (Feb. 1972): The now-rare "Women in Film" issue. Women (including Eleanor Perry, Anita Loos, Sylvia Spring, Tanya Ballantyne MacKay, and Stephanie Rothman) on Women in Film; filmographies; interviews with Shirley Clarke, and Joyce Wieland; reviews. $5.00

☐ No. 3 (April 1972): "The Life and Times of Michael Snow"; two articles on Third World films; Naomi Wise on "The Hawksian Woman"; reviews of "Clockwork Orange" and "Last Picture Show". $5.00

☐ No. 4 (June 1972): Stuart Kaminsky's marathon Donald Siegel interview, introduced by Peter Bogdanovich; Joan Mellen on Kurosawa. Reviews of "The Godfather", "The Last Movie", "Le Boucher", "WR", "What's Up Doc?", "Tout va bien". $3.00

☐ No. 5 (July 1972): Sex, Marriage and the Movies; a report on the Cannes Film Festival: more on Women in Film. Reviews of "And Now For Something Completely Different", "Culpepper Cattle Co.", and "The Pied Piper". $2.00

☐ No. 6 (Oct. 1972): Charlton Heston on Orson Welles; an interview with Haskell Wexler: Leigh Brackett's "Comment on the Hawksian Woman", reviews of "Hannie Caulder", "Slaughterhouse Five", and "Even Dwarfs Started Small". $2.00

☐ No. 7 (Dec. 1972): Articles on "The Chelsea Girls", Godzilla, Griffith, and Woody Allen. Reviews of "Duck You Sucker!", "Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie", "Fat City", and "The King of Marvin Gardens". $2.50

☐ No. 8 (March 1973): The Take One Howard Hawks interview; plus articles on Griffith's talkies and Joseph Losey. Reviews of "Discreet Charm" and "Marvin Gardens", plus "Last Tango in Paris. $4.00

☐ No. 9 (May 1973): Sergio Leone—an article and an interview; plus an interview with Carl Foreman and articles on Terence Fisher and "A Woman of Paris". Reviews of "Pulp", "Ludwig", "August & July", and "High Plains Drifter". $2.00

☐ No. 10. (July 1973): An all-interview issue: Bruce Dern,

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Henry Fonda, James Wong Howe, and the makers of "Cannibal Girls". Plus reviews of "The Poseidon Adventure", "The Harder They Come", and "Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid". $3.50

☐ No. 11 (Sept. 1973): Interview with Ray Bradbury and Tom Laughlin; articles on Allan Dwan and Edward Ludwig. Reviews of "O Lucky Man!", "Westworld", "State of Seige", and "Charley Varrick". $2.00

☐ No. 12 (Nov. 1973): A defense of David Lean, and other articles on Kung Fu and BBS's corporate style; plus a nasty interview with Costa Gavras. A review of "Mean Streets." $2.00

VOLUME 4

☐ No. 1 (published Jan. 1974): Interviews with Eric Rohmer and Mae West; an examination of the National Film Board's Challenge for Change program; and Leigh Brackett on script-writing "The Big Sleep" and "The Long Goodbye". $1.50

☐ No. 2 (March 1974): Richard Meltzer takes apart Elvis Presley; interviews with Monte Hellman, distributor Dan Talbot and François Truffaut; and an inside look at the Cannes Film Festival. $3.00

No. 3 (May 1974): Phil Ochs on Bruce Lee; Roberto Rossellini's interview with Salvador Allende; and "Being Canadian Means Always Having To Say You're Sorry". Sold out.

☐ No. 4 (July 1974): Rossellini interviewed and an in-depth report on porno filmmaking. Amos Vogel reviews "The Exorcist". $3.50

☐ No. 5 (Sept. 1974): A Porn Symposium; articles on Cagney, Pasolini and the early days at the NFB; Robert Aldrich is interviewed. $1.50

☐ No. 6 (Nov. 1974): The inside story of the making of "Janis" and the attempt to make a follow-up to "Night of th Living Dead." Plus and article on Rainer Werner Fassbinder. $3.00

☐ No. 7 (Dec. 1974): A true collector's item; Alanna Nash's definitive "Remembering D.W. Griffith", filled with never-before-published photos and interviews. $6.00

☐ No. 8 (March 1975): A Griffith filmography and bibliography; A William Clothier interview; and Bruce Lee's voice spills the beans. $1.50

☐ No. 9 (May 1975): An article on Ozu; interviews with Donald Westlake, Ismail Merchant and James Ivory; and James Monaco's comprehensive eight-page "Film: How and Where to Find Out What You Want to Know". $2.00

☐ No. 10 (June 1975): Three points of view on editing films for TV; an interview with Steven Spielberg; and a column by Richard Dreyfuss. $5.00

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No. 2 (May 1976): A Friendly Salute to Alfred Hitchcock: Truffaut, Mike Hodges, Brian De Palma, John Russell Taylor, James Stewart, Phillippe Halsman, Ingrid Bergman, Cary Grant. A rarity. If you don't have a copy of this issue, you ain't serious about movies. Sold out.

☐ No. 3 (August 1976): Russ Meyer lets it all hang out; so does Milos Forman; Patrick McGilligan assesses the film career of Ronald (who?) Reagan. $1.50

☐ No. 4 (Oct. 1976): A wonderful interview with Harlan Ellison; Monaco writes about Jean-Pierre Léaud; reviews of "India Song", "French Provincial" and "Bugs Bunny Superstar". $1.50

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FILM BOOKS

Romanticising scholarship

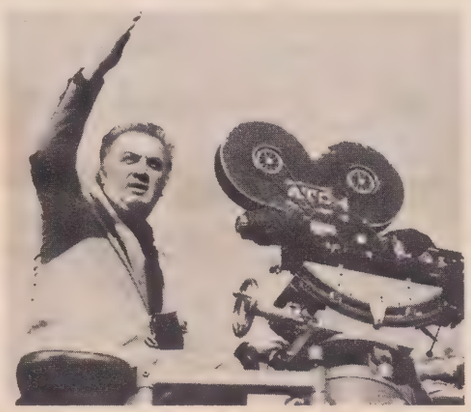
Federico Fellini: An annotated bibliography by Barbara Anne Price and Theodore Price.
The Scarecrow Press, Inc.,
Metuchen, New Jersey & London.
$11 hardcover.

Federico Fellini: A Guide to References and Sources by John C. Stubbs with Constance D. Markey and Marc Lenzini.
G.K. Hall & Co.,
70 Lincoln Street, Boston, Massachusetts.
$30 hardcover (10% higher outside of US).

Federico Fellini: Essays in Criticism edited by Peter Bondanella.
Oxford University Press, New York.
$17.25 hardcover, $5.75 paper.

If you object to film festivals because they force you to compare films which have not been made to be compared, you will certainly object to a group review of books, and in fact I will say right at the top that this wasn't my idea. But since in this case the books themselves are guilty of "grouping"—all three of them practically consist of it—I feel less guilty in subjecting their authors to the same criteria.

Another introductory note I mustn't



omit is that I am of course partial to the theme of all three—Fellini—having met the man in 1956 and maintained a somewhat notorious love-hate relationship with him for the past 23 years. Your editor is sure that this eminently qualifies me to discuss books about him, and I am the last to disagree, as long as you permit me to state that obviously what I will say will be extremely personal. Certainly I cannot look at the books with the same benevolent guile as the authors.

The first thing any author does when he gets somebody else's book into his hands is look up the index and find out if he's mentioned. A most rewarding endeavor in this case, since there turn out to be an awful lot of entries in my name in the two books that took the trouble to publish an index, and, less obviously, a lot of unauthorized quoting from things I have written in the one that didn't. Unfortunately, besides tickling my ego, this told me more about the methods the authors used to research their work than they would perhaps have liked. And it shows up the dangers of what can only be termed the grouping compulsion, this drive to produce "the longest and most detailed work on Fellini's films in any language" (quoted from the foreword of one of these assemblies). As if more were more, to paraphrase, juxtapose and justify Mies van der Rohe, whose architectural motto "less is more" should, to my mind, hallmark our civilization if we want to save it. Of course, applying it to these works would have meant choice, criteria and judgment, and only one of these books can claim to have exercised these.

Mind you, I'm not, of course, saying that the things I've written about Fellini aren't worth anthologising or even just indexing (which is all that two of the books do, in essence), but it turns out that I'm being quoted from Polish or Italian minority magazines, which have republished stuff of mine from American or German minority magazines, and that all those entries in the index are, a lot of the time, the same silly article over and over, only in various languages, and what the hell that's supposed to do for a student of film theory in Kansas I cannot begin to conceive.

It also means this: have the authors been able to distinguish between my review of *Amarcord* in Hungarian and the same one published in Zurich? Or were they so happy to have another entry that they didn't bother to check? I am not saying they didn't, but the feeling I get is that they were collecting numbers, like roulette chips. And that these books, which are clearly intended for the US college circuit with its increasing snobbishness about movie theories, pretend to a learnedness which isn't there.

This is also brought out by the often pathetic romaticism in which the scholarship is clothed, and perhaps here I should start making distinctions. The most painful, in this respect, is the Price, which contains the very priceless statement (for the quoting of which I beg your indulgence, but it would take too much self-control for me not to): "We are a husband and wife team, very much in love; and... the wife did most of the hard-core detective work, hunting down and

tabulating the material, as well as preparing meals for the husband, as Giulietta does for Federico."

I am afraid I am not surprised, because what this cuteness is the tip of the iceberg of, is a deeply rooted, typically American, derivative insecurity, a kind of emulating bandwagoning, essentially a well-meaning *naïveté*, born, perhaps, of this constant craning of the neck across the ocean, which has helped a lot of passing faddle-daddle like "auteurism" and "semioticism", heard of and quickly forgotten in Europe, to take such unprecedented root in America.

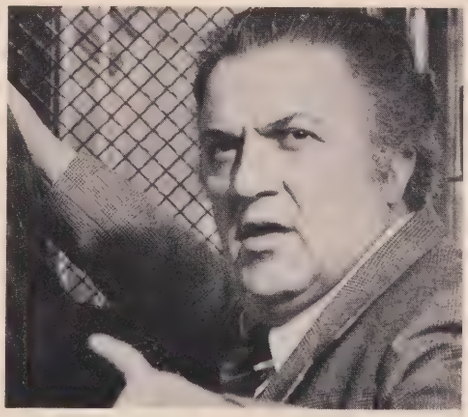
Even the idea itself: to publish, practically at the same time (and don't tell me publishers don't know what their competitors plan) three more collections on Fellini, of which two are pure reference works, and the third an anthological analysis (in order to avoid saying that it is an analytical anthology, which is probably what its author Bondanella would prefer me to do) of a variety of highflying abstract views on Fellini's work and meaning and intent, seems to me to represent the cancerous affliction of much of our scholasticism: the need to elevate to the level of mystique the intuition and simplicity of a

creator. Back in the last century the French anthropologist Thième said that all races are what they are because of the food they eat and the air they breathe, and that surely in reasonable time Americans would go back to bright colors, hero worship and tribal family groups. Personally, I would say Sitting Bull might be preferable to Fellini as a national hero.

To be fair: there is no question that we are dealing with sincere authors, awfully sincere authors. Even the ones who are not drooling like the Price couple, however, are victims of the hero syndrome, but what the hell, if it sells books? Aren't the students worshippers by definition? Well, maybe so, and maybe publishers aren't unhappy about it, but for me, if there is one evil that books should combat, it is precisely this replacement of live, immediate concerns, which are usually the ones of sophomores, with these academic notions of The Great, The Infallible, The Leaders, in life or in art. I have yet to meet a single director who doesn't look askance at the conceptual skyscrapers critics construct, and Fellini, who has never kept an award, a book or even a personal letter, and who loves life and goes on, never looking back, will undoubtedly put on his most supercilious benevolence in the mirrored backroom at Canova's on the Piazza del Popolo, when I read him some of the quotes from these books next month. Supercilious, because the pedestal position apalls him, and benevolence because he wishes nobody any ill and if they enjoy this sort of stuff, these Americans, he's happy to have contributed to the game.

Lest I be accused of superciliousness myself, however, let me be more specific. We are dealing with three books in an ascending arch of importance: the Price, the Stubbs, and the Bondanella. The first is really harmless and I have now ridiculed it enough. Despite my emotional rejection of it as a serious work it does provide a lot of uncritical facts, and maybe somebody is looking for just that. They (and Stubbs) have even found out, God nows from where, that I played a part in *8 1/2*, so they must have scraped the bottom of the information barrel.

Stubbs is a step higher. Apparently a master of précis, you can tell he's gone (or his assistants Markey and Lenzini have gone) and read all that verbiage they list. We are now into interpretative reporting of facts, and the long paragraphs outlining the various film stories are introduced by things like "a note of criticism begins to emerge" (describing the fascist parade in *Amarcord*) or "the treatment grows more somber" (of Gradisca in the same film) or "more serious" (of the family of Titta, on the



preceding page). Nevertheless, this is a decent job of collecting all the more standard things that have been said about Fellini, and may be useful to students of an adventurous bent in ascertaining whether the bit of original thinking they've had about Fellini is really that original. To judge by some of the commonplaces ("the quests for self-definition and liberation have become major themes," "liberation comes ... through self-acceptance,," *"8 1/2* and *Juliet* are anti-clerical" (they're not—GB), "color is the important element," e cosi via) nothing about Fellini, this day, seems to be very original. Sure, sure, some of these commonplaces may well have been lifted from some of my articles.

Ribbing aside, the Stubbs is really a useful tool, if you have the grain of salt that it needs to be taken with. It has all the credits, the biography, the facts and the embalming ingredients, a fair list of things written about and by Fellini, and an important element, missing in most of the Price entries: a quickie résumé of what the quoted piece says. But I must admit (again judging by a purely personal example) that these résumés sound pretty banal when thus reduced; I seem to have finished off *Giulietta* by the quoted catchphrase "the film represents a search for stability and reason." In short, I don't really believe justice can be done by the précis method, and maybe this disqualifies this review, because what else am I doing? Nevertheless, if I had an eager beaver son, this is a book I wouldn't laugh off his shelves. But anyone who gives me 10 entries in his index and Antonioni only one, must be biased somewhere. Still, it's not on the level of the Price, where I have 16 entries and Giulietta Masina has only one. I suppose atonement is presumed by giving Andy Sarris 18.

The really weighty entry is the Bondanella. Here, all is interpretation, and facts are its tools—pretty much a reversal of the method of the other two books. The "essays in criticism" of which the

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book consists cover a wide range. "Although no man can be said to be totally reponsible for the acceptance of fantasy as a legitimate filmic mode," says Patrizio Rossi on page 254, "it was unquestionably Federico Fellini's midwifery which helped it be born of the already established Italian neorealism." From this and some of the topics covered (Jungianism, Catholicism, the visionary, Salvation, etc.) one again derives this vague impression of rigidity that surrounds discussions of the famous like a sick moon: the rigidity which is the fruit of worship, the need to classify and to elevate, the lack of real contact with the object of one's adoration, one's own strife to "understand" and thus be on the right side of the successful, the re-invention of the man's image. Nowhere in all of these books, and least of all in this best of the three, is there any chance that a reader might think Fellini also snores or farts.

I'm afraid, however, that this is practically a built-in fault of books of this kind, where a serious attempt is made to collate a meaningful miscellany. In this instance the task was complicated by Bondanella's avowed intent to be at once "fundamental," "international" and historical," while at the same time "reflecting Marxist, religious, historical, philosophical, literary and semiological points of view" (all quotes from the preface). Since there is surely no director as well covered in literature as Fellini, this intent must have imposed upon the collator a monumental sifting task, and no other Fellini expert could be expected to agree with the residue.

The touchiest choice is represented by the 5 "Fellini on Fellini" tidbits, ranging from a wildly obsolete 1959 artifact concerning the work on the pre-*Dolce Vita* cycle to a very good Aldo Tassone interview on *Casanova*. Disciples will have noted that for at least 20 years Fellini has not written about himself in the first person, and interviews are always doctored, as I can certify from voluminous experience. In fact, having written some of the "first-person" Fellini articles myself 20 years ago (now here's a revelation for aficionados), and knowing colleagues who have done the same over the years, I would doubt that this or any other book contains any pieces actually written by Fellini himself. I am, despite all these years of acquaintance, in considerable difficulty trying to imagine the man doing anything with a pen than draw, and I think I have only once ever actually seen him involved with correspondence from behind a desk—dictating. In any case, because of translation, whatever any book may contain will have been streamlined by additional intelligence, and the alienation increased. This book fails, as have done all preceding ones, to transmit a living image of the man as man. But I grant you: seeking this particular image may be my own personal obsession.

If I try to circumvent my own need, then, does the book work? I think it does, because it manages to cut across boundaries of language, culture, fashion, and style to scoop into a single 314-page volume as much serious variety as can be expected within the limitations cited: if we accept *prima facie* (as potential readers will) the notion of Fellini as a public figure. Well, readers will say, can Moravia, Bazin, Metz, Bluestone and the rest of the critical Pantheon be wrong in making this assumption? Of course not; it's just that below the public lurks the private, and I have never yet found that the latter didn't influence the former, and I'm a nut for finding out how. That said, I think Bondanella has probably done the best book of its kind possible.

To sum up: a basic sin seems to me to lie at the root of all these endeavors: the sin of distance, the terribly well-meaning hard labor of collecting information at its trading posts: the libraries, the publications, the pre-digested sources. It doesn't seem to me that any of these authors actually came to Rome and spent time with Fellini, and somewhere I have a lurking notion that they wouldn't like to risk doing that. The whole elaborately constructed image might—mightn't it—just plop! collapse. If it turns out that I am wrong, and that all or some of them did come, I think that makes it worse, because one certainly doesn't get the impression that they did. Mind you, I'm talking of the people who put together the books, not the individual authors anthologized in them.

Some of the inexcusable things are funny, though, to the attentive reader. How can Patrizio Rossi, who on page 257 of the Bondanella calls me "the English reporter" (he may not have found out that I was American until he came and rented my Rome apartment from me in the spring of 1978; but if he didn't know me when he wrote this, it's even funnier) know, when he quotes from one of my interviews with Fellini, that the words were said to me "in a hesitating, nostalgic tone of voice"?

Actually, what is happening—and it happens everywhere in this kind of film writing—is that Rossi and all the other writers are constructing their own image, complete with tone of voice and supposed intent, of the man they love. It can't be helped, of course, and all great artists do it, but while it's fine for films and novels, it's dangerous for what pretends to be a work of objectivity. Maybe there isn't enough humility in these essays, but I don't think that's the real problem. Rather the opposite. Maybe there isn't enough swagger, not enough prepotency, not enough self-depiction on the part of these serious critics, to allow the reader to recognize who is writing and the writer's motivations, so that he could more easily discard them, peel them off, and in understanding the bias, remove it.

Gideon Bachmann

Gideon Bachmann *is the author of innumerable articles and reviews concerning Fellini, and is the director of* Ciao, Federico!, *an hour-long color documentary with 12 festival exposures and prizes on its back and a long critical career. Fellini didn't speak to him for 7 years after the documentary was made, but has now made peace with him, and the film is finally going on Italian television in 1979.*

Mindscreen

Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard, and First-Person Film by Bruce F. Kawin, Princeton University Press. 241 pp.

Bruce Kawin's new book is excellent. You might cavil at this dubious point or that, or rebel at the occasional baroque overelaborations, but you are always in the presence of a theorist whose knowledge of film is impressive and refreshingly catholic. Though Kawin concentrates primarily on Bergman and Godard, he also turns his penetrating gaze on films as disparate as Porter's *The Life of an American Fireman*, Chuck Jones's *Hair-Raising Hare* (with Bugs Bunny), Keaton's *Sherlock Junior*, and *Last Year at Marienbad*. The range of his reading is equally wide and his application of the insights of Wittgenstein and others into the nature of language and other sign-systems is particularly striking. In some ways, his book goes beyond anything that has ever been written about point-of-view in either film or fiction.

He begins his analysis of first-person narration by distinguishing among simple voice-over narration, the momentary subjective camera angle (say, of a fist flying toward the camera), and the more extensive subjective identification, as in the opening sequence of Hitchcock's *Rebecca* where the voice-over and the tracking camera obviously represent the narrator's point of view. Kawin's point is that later, "even when the heroine appears before the camera, one understands that this is still *her* story; it is not necessary...for the audience to share her angle of vision in order to feel itself confined to her point of view." This understanding then provides the basis for a three-part typology of subjectivity: that

which the character says (voice-over), that which he sees (subjective focus), and most significant, that which he thinks or which is meant to represent a product of his consciousness. It is this last that Kawin calls "mindscreen."

This term is useful, including as it does manifestations as diverse as Dorothy's dream of Oz, the "unverifiable memories" of, and the subjectively biased personal narratives gathered by the reporter Thompson in *Citizen Kane*. A further elaboration of the concept concerns its relation to aesthetic self-consciousness. Kawin deftly analyzes Bugs Bunny's self-aware shenanigans throughout *Hair-Raising Hare*, a cartoon he finds interesting because it is "without internal mindscreen—without, that is, the illusion that any of its images originates in the mind's eye of a particular character," yet "is aware of itself *as film*" and therefore "appears to imagine itself..."

Other films analyzed by Kawin include the little-noticed *Coming Apart* (1969) directed by Milton Moses Ginsberg, *Last Year at Marienbad* and *Rashomon*. Comparing the latter two in terms of their mindscreens is especially illuminating: "A mindscreen *shows* that it has consciousness. It is both an agency of visual telling and an expression of mind in the world; in short, it is the eye as I, the Vision of vision. In *Marienbad*, these private narrations so determine the audience's experience of the filmed world that one does not feel the urge (as in *Rashomon)* to probe the mindscreens for 'what really happened'—the mindscreens *are* what happened: in fact, what happen."

He argues eloquently that first-person narration in film can be as complex as it is in fiction, and that in spite of superficial differences, they are really quite similar: "The 'I' signifier (of fiction) and the 'mind's eye' signifier (of film) differ in that the former is included in its sentence, while the latter is contextual...In both cases the audience is led to conjure up an image or concept of a systemic presenter (usually fictitious) whose words or 'vision' are contained in the work but who exists elsewhere—at a desk, for instance, or offscreen." He goes on to argue that film points in two different directions at the same time—toward the real, physical world, and the world of the narrator's consciousness. Yet, the image can only hint at these other worlds, so "the audience is encouraged to imagine (reconstruct)" them: "the three-dimensional one, of which each shot gives a partial view, and the mental one, of which the mindscreen is the evidence."

The reconstruction of the off-screen narrator brings with it the possibility of self-reflexivity, as we saw earlier with *Hair-Raising Hare*, and the second half of the book concerns the manipulation of the self-conscious mindscreen in selected films of Bergman and Godard. In the section on Bergman he concentrates mainly on *Persona* (which he analyzes brilliantly) and *Shame;* in the section on Godard, which is clearly indebted to Susan Sontag's seminal essay on that filmmaker in *Styles of Radical Will*, he limits himself to *Les Carabiniers, Tout Va Bien* and *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*. His readings of these films are so complex that they utterly resist summation; suffice it to say that they are excellent even when he goes too far. The basic difference he sees between these two directors is that Bergman is concerned with the metaphysics of self-consciousness, Godard deals more with the politics of self-consciousness. "Bergman disguises his identification with the 'potential linguistic focus' of the image, so that the mindscreen of *Persona* appears to be that of the film as a poetic object, while Godard establishes a dialogue (that becomes a dialectic) between 'the potential linguistic focus' of the filmed world and his own, personal voice, so that the mindscreen of *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (also 1966) incorporates the conflict of their attempts at discourse."

Near the end, Kawin cannot help but give in to that didacticism, that slight whiff of the Messianic that critics occasionally succumb to in their understandable longing to be part of the creative process itself, instead of forever operating on the already-created. He forthrightly admits, for example, that "by calling attention to the self-conscious mindscreen in this book I hope to make more filmmakers aware of its possibilities, so that the mode can develop further, build up its own history, and advance the self-consciousness of its audience..." Frankly, I cannot imagine many active filmmakers plowing through this book, but Kawin's desire to actually affect the course of film history is to be admired.

Peter Brunette

Peter Brunette *teaches film and literature at George Mason University. He has published in* Film Quarterly, Film Comment, Cineaste, The Washington Post Book World *and other journals. He is presently writing a book on the films of Roberto Rossellini.*

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"Sarris's 'rabidly centrist' position...is plain...The author sees little conflict between his politics and his esthetics, and devotes equal attention to each in these thought-provoking essays."—**Publishers Weekly*

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Bazin

André Bazin, by Dudley Andrew. Oxford University Press. Hardback only. $11.95.

Dudley Andrew has written an admiring book on the life of André Bazin, French film critic, Personalist, film theoretician, partisan of mise en scène over montage, versimilitude over abstraction, pedagogue, passionate scholar, father of the New Wave, *Cahiers du Cinéma* organizer, and father-adopter of François Truffaut. The result is an evocative biography that touches all these bases, but never a critical one in which hard questions are asked of the Bazinian aesthetic. Andrew's book is not, to paraphrase Godard's Paul in *Masculine Feminine*, "the book I dreamed of."

As a character study, *André Bazin* is admirable, however; the biographical research Andrew conducted in France for five years paid handsome dividends. The book is best at defining Bazin's 1940-1950 period of filmic activity, when he functioned as a sort of organizing angel, a cheerleader for cinema as a worthy art form. This may have been Bazin's finest hour. Andrew treats us to splendid accounts of Bazin's film club activity, and his bringing together of future directors Truffaut, Resnais, Chris Marker and Godard. The narrative takes us up to 1951, when Bazin founded *Cahiers*; but Andrew refrains from assessing Bazin's true importance there. Andrew does point out that Bazin never became the Zavattini of a French Neo-Realist movement because the New Wave filmmakers in France turned out to be neither Marxist nor, Rohmer excepted, Catholic. They rejected French Neo-Realism for a hybrid replay of the American cinema.

Andrew stops here. He does not wish to define his hero Bazin as lost in the 1950s, seeking impotently to impose ethics on those who just wanted the cinema "to play with itself."

Here is the point: everyone loved Bazin as a human being and stimulator-catalyst and enjoyed the discussions he provoked at screenings at *Cahiers* headquarters on the Champs-Elysées; but no one practiced his theories. Does Dudley Andrew agree that there are no French-made Bazinian films? How do we explain the hundreds of religious references in the New Wave's written criticism up to 1959 and, outside of Rohmer, the lack of religiosity in the New Wave films themselves? It appears the moment Bazin died, his disciples unfurled a different set of colors.

As it stands, the next book on Bazin must begin with the fact that the strongly secular triumvirate of Godard, Chabrol and Rivette defined the New Wave in praxis as a study of narrative forms that dealt with facing the shock of the 20th Century, and not as a cinema of ethical concerns (except, in the most indirect sense, Godard). Here is the germ of a new and necessary book, one which would finish what Andrew has begun, and in which André Bazin would be located where he belongs, within history.

John Kreidl

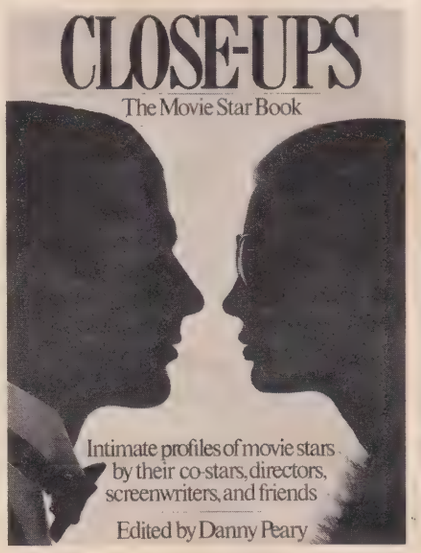
John Kriedl *has written biographical studies of Nicholas Ray and Alain Resnais and is currently completing a book on Godard as critic.*

Close-Ups

Close-Ups, Edited by Danny Peary. Workman 1978. 624 pp. $15.95, $8.95 paper.

The genre of cut and paste movie star book has turned such a fast buck at the expense of the unwary that one approaches another collection of profiles rather gingerly. But, any comparison between these travesties and Peary's superb collation of insights into the craft of one hundred and forty of the world's finest performers is patently absurd. How the editor managed to assemble these vivid etchings from such an imposing array of professionals is less important than the end result, which is a veritable cultural frame of reference. The book's authenticity is clearly established from Harold Clurman's precise sketch of Chaplin to Stanley Kramer's fond remembrance of Spencer Tracy. The essayists write from a unique personal and professional perspective. Witness Allan Scott's screenplays for Claudette Colbert, Henry Levin's direction of Al Jolson and Clifton Webb, Leonard Spigelgass' friendship with Edward G. Robinson, Reginald LeBorg's beginnings with Lon Chaney Jr. and Arthur Hiller's collaboration with George C. Scott and it becomes evident why their portraits are so finely drawn. Irene Dunne's description of Cary Grant, Richard Maibaum's memory of Alan Ladd, Alvah Bessie's recollection of Bette Davis, Mervyn LeRoy's Clark Gable anecdote and Patricia Bosworth's girlhood introduction to Montgomery Clift are no less arresting. And there are crisp analyses offered by competent critics. David Thomson's pieces on Lauren Bacall and James Dean are typically incisive. Molly Haskell's tribute to John Wayne is especially lucid, as is Richard Schickel's summary of Charles Laughton's interpretation. Roger Ebert's Bob Mitchum and Robert Cumbow's evaluation of Jack Nicholson are brilliant. That leaves one hundred and twenty-one more—don't miss them or this splendid book.

Alan L. Miller


CLOSE-UPS
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Edited by Danny Peary

Alan L. Miller *is a Michigan-based freelance writer.*

50's fun

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Medved was saddled with a subject the major attribute of which is its irrelevance, and with a one-joke concept that had to be sustained for 300 pages. Considering the parameters, Medved succeeds, managing to stay amusing and surprisingly clever. The films are treated thoroughly; and although there are too few photographs, the ones that are featured are appropriately hideous and/or banal (such as the one showing George Nader's bleeding ear, or the shot of Gig Young alone).

Happily, Medved shows no respect for anyone involved in these films. For

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s interminably frolic for honey? Or
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des the classic scene of a character
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s the time a quarter of a century ago
ny brother trudged miles through
est Virginia snow to celebrate his
irthday with *The Count of Monte*
only to end up, alas, with *The*
ss of Monte Cristo and Sonja

lling *Curuca* and *Countess* is
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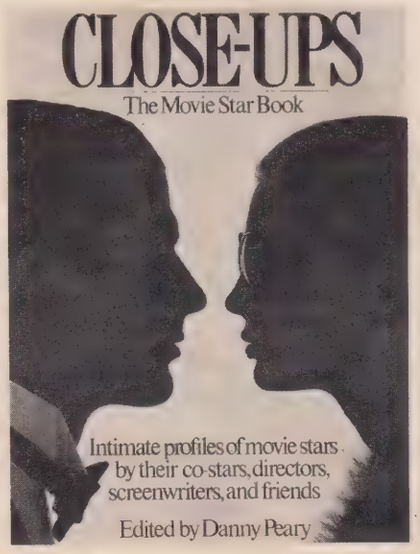
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instance, even though Arch Hall, Sr., the talentless director of *Eegah!* granted him an interview, at a Bob's Big Boy, and supplied him with three crummy photos, Medved turned around and unmercifully insulted Arch Hall, Jr., the talentless star of the film, claiming the lad "had a face only a mother could love."

If there is a major fault with *The Fifty Worst Films* it is that Medved screened only those films that other critics had already condemned. By jumping on the bandwagon, Medved played it too safe. While I was happy to see the inclusion of such disasters as *Dondi* and *The Trial of Billy Jack*, and was pleasantly surprised to see Medved denounce *The Goldwyn Follies* (which I got caught with on an airplane), I think few choices were inspired ones.

It would have been preferable if Medved had bypassed such easy targets as *Myra Breckinridge*, the musical remake of *Lost Horizon*, and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, plus a whole slew of mediocrities that shouldn't be included in the collection anyway: *The Omen*, *The Conquerer*, *Northwest Mounted Police*, etc. Why not concentrate on major debacles like *Robot Man*, featuring a monster in a diver's helmet and a gorilla costume and directed by a man who subsequently attempted suicide, or *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians*, the title of which tells all?

In making his choices, Medved conveniently ignored army training films, porno flicks, Polish "B" movies, and Mexican monster pictures, thus disqualifying everything South-of-the-Border from *Wrestling Women Versus the Aztec Mummy* to *Voodoo Heartbeat*, a film which stooped to out-takes from a Philip Ahn movie. And what about such other obvious omissions as *A Flea in Her Ear*, with the inimitable Moustache? Or the rousing *In Old Vienna* with Henrietta Hesse? Or Jeff Chandler in *Yankee Pasha?*

While Medved offers us Gene Autry's *Twilight on the Rio Grande*, I opt for *Gunfighters at the Case Grande*, in which the cowboys can only start their horses by saying "Let's ride." Medved selects *Jet Attack*, but that's an Edward L. Cahn masterpiece next to his "direction" of *Incident in an Alley*. Medved claims *Daughter of the Jungle* is the worst such opus around, yet I'll back *The Bride and the Beast*, in which a gorilla carries the heroine off into the jungle and the film ends! And why did he forget the Disney classic, *Yellowstone Cubs*, in which some bears interminably frolic for honey? Or *House of the Black Death*, which actually includes the classic scene of a character appearing on screen who was killed off earlier in the movie?

Obviously the most pleasurable effect of Medved's book is to make you reminisce about your own most miserable cinematic moments. You might remember the harshly disappointing denouement when *Curuca, Beast of the Amazon* turned out to be a man dressed up as a monster. And you will recall family lore, such as the time a quarter of a century ago when my brother trudged miles through the West Virginia snow to celebrate his ninth birthday with *The Count of Monte Cristo* only to end up, alas, with *The Countess of Monte Cristo* and Sonja Henie.

Recalling *Curuca* and *Countess* is hardly *Remembrance of Things Past* but it's undeniable fun, and that's reason enough to read, and even argue with, Medved's book.

Danny Peary

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LETTERS

continued from page 4

didn't pick up on it being about the aftermath of the war effort (at least they didn't see it as central).

I'd like to mention one thing that I didn't see in your article. (At the risk of bringing coals to Newcastle.) The first and last names of the primary ichthyologist were never given together, but did you notice what the name of this scientist so closely linked to the Vietnam War was? Bob Hope. Yep.

Matthew Landau

Dear old Max

Disney certainly gave a lot to animation, but I'm sure he would not like to take credit for inventing the rotoscope away from dear old Max Fleischer who filed for a patent on December 6, 1915, a day after Walter Elias Disney's fourteenth birthday.

Raul da Silva
Rochester, New York

Roasting Peary

I am of late surprised and saddened by the decline of intelligence and sensitivity evidenced by some reviews that have managed to show up in TAKE ONE. Gerald Peary (reviewing James Naremore's book, *The Magic World of Orson Welles*) seems to belong to an uncreative, somewhat dim-witted cult of sulking cinefanatics; one of their greatest attributes is to disparage artists who aren't creating enough "product" to brighten their lackluster existences.

Artists like Welles are under no obligation, least of all dumb enough, to fall within the commercial studio entrapment of supply-and-demand. Buffs of Peary's cloth aren't only misguided but evidently brainwashed by the super-conglomerate dictum of mass-market merchandising regardless of *lower quality*; for, in the final analysis, that's exactly the condition of our general commercial environment: lower quality.

Calvin Thomas Beck

Peary replies: I am glad you so enjoyed my review, although I am not (ugh!) "a buff." Nor do I lead a lackluster existence, but don't take the word of a "dim-witted cinefanatic." Moreover, I stick to my guns: Welles is a lazy genius and should eat less and make more movies.

One Way Street

In Viertel and Colker's article, "The *New* New Hollywood" (Sept. '78) they claim that "The results prove that there are as many ways to get to the top as there are people who get there." This is untrue.

To answer their question, "Where did they come from, and how did they arrive?", let me suggest that it doesn't hurt to be white (all 7), male (6 out of 7), middle to upper-middle class (seemingly all), and to have gone to a major film school or Ivy League college (all except Landis, apparently).

David Erik Wade

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LA PLUME DE MA TANTE

Results of Comp. No. 1

We asked for acronyms which made precis of movie plots.

Report by Luncheon

Dear oh dear: you'll have to be a bit cleverer than that. There seems to have been a great deal of point missing going on. Our postbag mostly contained reams of multi-syllabled and wholly irrelevant words which eventually spelled out everyone's favorite movies. Well—there's nothing very funny about that, is there? Nobody split our sides, but free subs to those who managed to force a smile out of us.

Sexually Inhibited Siamese Twin Eliminates Romantic Suitors

R. Scott Renau
Mill Valley, CA

Silly Take Involving Nitwits Gambling
Super Tremendous Astronomical Rite With Archaic Religious Symbolism
Bitchy Adolescent Does Some Excessively Evil Deeds
Collossally Long Essay On Princes And Tarts—Really Ancient

Dennis Lynch
Rapids, IA

Competition No.2

By Richard King

Even superheroes have problems coping with modern city living. In *Superman* Clark Kent searched desperately for a place he could change into his Superman suit. All he found was a modern see-through telephone stall. Uh oh!

Superman found a temporary solution to his problem. But what about next time? Where will the man of steel find a place to change? Send us your ideas. Be witty, be original, be faster than a speeding bullet. Superman needs your help.

Example: THE PURLOINED LETTER TECHNIQUE: If Clark Kent changed under a trench coat, he'd be taken for a mild-mannered flasher. No one would notice that he was actually changing into his superthreads.

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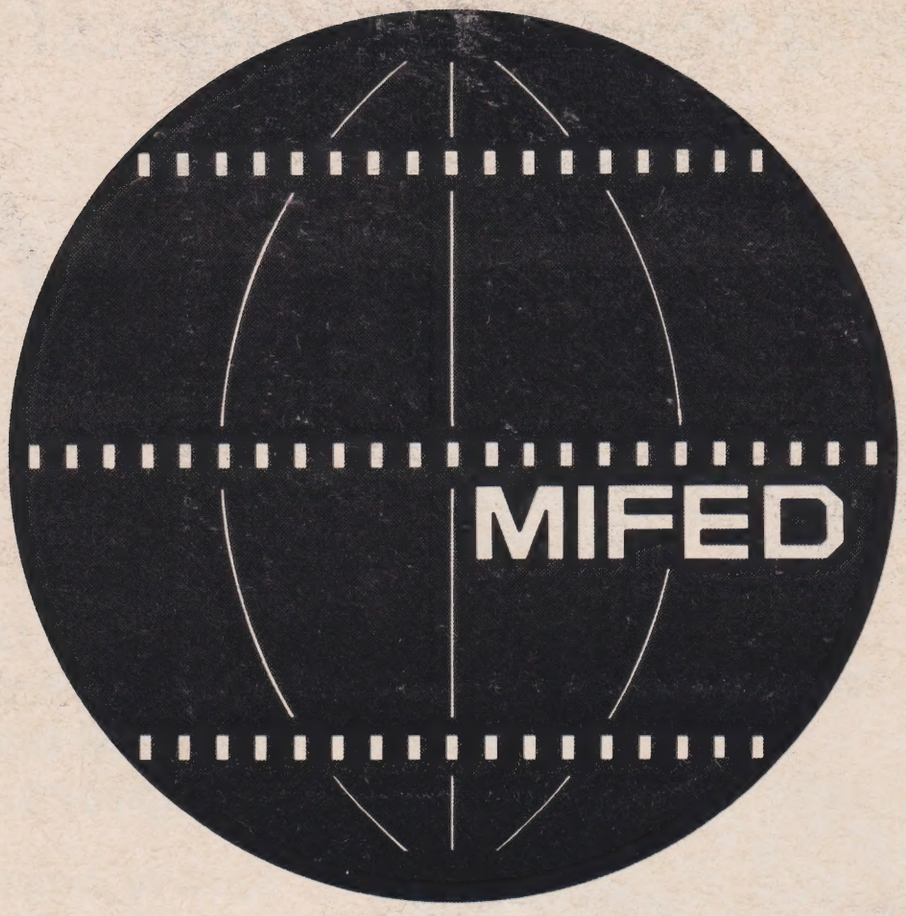

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